

FREE

Kent on Sunday

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WEEKLY FREE NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

Mid edition

No 641

EDF ENERGY London and South of England Media Awards

NEWS

Joy as MS centre opens

Campaigners' hard work pays off at last

NEWS

Vulnerable to drone attack?

Dungeness at threat from unmanned craft

NEWS

Where do all the Christmas trees go?

We look at what happens to the county's pines and firs

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The Whites take on Premiership side Crystal Palace in FA Cup home tie

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Standing toe-to-toe with the big boys of football

THERE'S an undeniable romance to a classic David versus Goliath contest.

People like to stand behind the underdog, cheering him onto an unlikely victory, usurping the giant and achieving an almost impossible dream in the process.

Today sees one of these situations, as Kent's own Dover Athletic take on mighty Premiership team Crystal Palace in the third round of the FA Cup.

This is more than just a football match, it is a chance for the hard-working squad and staff to step out onto a national stage, representing not only our county but the hopes of the everyman against an opponent who has every weapon at their disposal.

It is also a chance for everyone in the county to stand united as we cheer on the Whites.

Dover fans can take some comfort in their team's New Year's Day victory over Welling – with that win

under their belt, the players can walk onto the pitch with confidence in their current form.

On top of that, the match will be contested at Crabble, the White's turf, giving them the valuable home advantage.

Win, lose or draw, one thing's for sure – it should be a fantastic game.

In other news, we visit a Multiple Sclerosis centre in Canterbury that is set to finally open after an epic 12-year campaign by fundraisers to collect the necessary cash. You see, overwhelming odds can be overturned!

We also look at claims that nuclear power station Dungeness may be under threat from unmanned drones.

On a lighter note we answer the question many have on their mind at this time of year – what happens to our old Christmas trees?

Here's wishing Dover Athletic FC well in its quest for FA Cup glory today. Enjoy your weekend.

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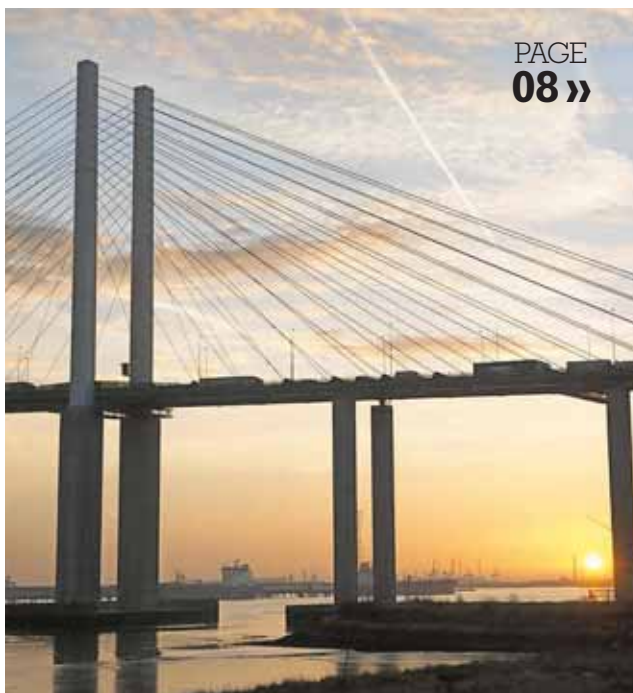
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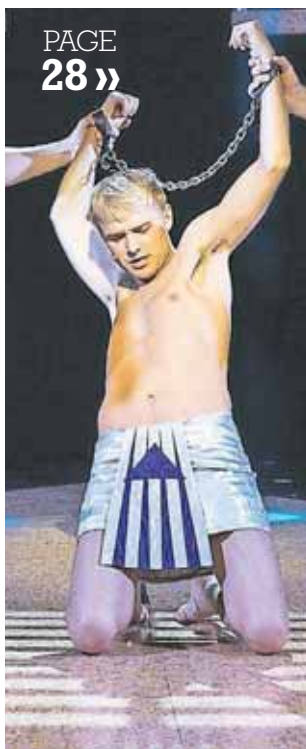
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New Year Honours List rewards county's finest

Jamie Weir

Jamie.Weir@archant.co.uk

MORE than 20 of the county's residents have received honours in the 2015 New Year Honours List.

Many of the awards given were for services to the county's communities, with volunteers such as Rachael Littlewood, who was made an MBE, rewarded for the work she has done as a carer in Gillingham.

The 84-year-old spearheaded the formation of the charity Medway Carers Centre, which gave support to family carers, after looking after her daughter who has severe rheumatoid arthritis, autism and challenging behaviour for 48 years.

The mother-of-six also does other charitable work, leading local charity Faith and Light which works to help disabled people and their families with groups in 80 countries.

Another octogenarian who received an honour is 85-year-old political activist Dorothy Weedon.

She has been made an MBE for work she has done in politics in the



HONOURED: The Queen will present honours to those on the list

Maidstone area – where she believes she has knocked on every door, or delivered leaflets to every house.

She has been a key figure in the Maidstone Liberal Association since 1952 when she began her grass-roots activism for the party.

Ms Weedon says during her time with the Liberal Democrats, she has gained a great deal from her association with the party, making many great friends and having a

lot of fun along the way.

Law and order in Kent has also seen its share of awards, with Thomas Philip Winsor, a Cranbrook resident, and HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary receiving a knighthood for his work as a public servant.

Stephanie Brivio, from Rochester, has been made an OBE for her continuing work to safeguard children as the assistant director of child protection at the

Department for Education.

And Canterbury woman Sylvia Donnelly has been made an MBE for services to child protection and voluntary work.

Tonbridge adventurer Felicity Aston is set to be made an MBE for services to polar exploration. The 37-year-old, who lives in Hildenborough, trekked to the coldest place on earth earlier this year, battling -50C temperatures in Siberia's Pole of Cold.

Kent wine producers to raise a glass to success of UK wine last year

MORE flutes of sparkling wine produced in Kent were clinked across the world on New Year's Eve than ever before, with sales of wine produced in the UK predicted to hit almost £100 million in 2015.

Cases of home grown bubbles, which make up 66 per cent of our total wine production, are now being shipped to more than 13 countries.

The rush on our sparkling wines has led to the acres of vines planted across the county more than doubling in the last decade. Total acres of vineyards in the UK now stand at more than 4,500, up from 1,879 in 2004, with 470 vineyards now open for business.

Environment secretary, Elizabeth Truss, says this is great news for the economy.

She said: "This industry is fizzing. There has never been a more exciting time for the English and Welsh sparkling wine industry and I look forward to seeing it go from strength to strength, taking its rightful place

alongside Champagne."

Tenterden-based Chapel Down vineyard is one of the county's producers seeing strong growth internationally, with global sales rising over the last five years. It now welcomes more than 50,000 visitors each year to its vineyards.

Frazer Thompson, CEO of Chapel Down, says the vineyard now exports across the globe.

He said: "Brand England and its food and drink reputation is getting stronger. And with our wines winning international medals and gaining recognition with leading wine critics, and our production growing rapidly, we are now in a great position to grow our exports."

In the last 16 years English sparkling wines have won 14 international sparkling wine trophies – no other country has achieved this. This year is also predicted to be a vintage year for English and Welsh sparkling wine, helping grow the industry further.

Tributes pour in after death of Maidstone crash 'angel'

FRIENDS have paid tribute to a 22-year-old woman who died in a car crash, calling her an 'angel'.

Nicole Parnell, from Maidstone, died after being critically injured in a crash on December 19. It is thought that she was travelling home after finishing work.

Kaycie-Jade Foster, who was among those who paid tribute to her on Twitter, said: "Heaven

gained another beautiful angel too soon. Thoughts are with the Parnell family."

Ms Parnell had been in a London hospital since the crash at the junction of Lughorse Lane and Hunton Hill in Hunton.

Her blue Peugeot 307 had come off the road, hitting a wall at about 9.50pm. No other cars were involved.

Dartford Crossing sees one million register for pre-pay

THE Highways Agency has released figures showing that one million vehicles are now registered for Dart Charge accounts.

Dart Charge is the new remote-payment scheme, where motorists pay for the Dartford Crossing online, by phone or in 'pay-zone' shops instead of stopping at toll booths. It's hoped the change will cut travel times by

creating free-flowing traffic.

Account holders can save up to one third of the price of crossing.

Those without accounts should pay for the crossing by midnight on the day after travelling. Those who do not pay on time will face a fine.

Drivers can set up a pre-pay account online, on the phone by calling 0300 300 0120 or in writing by requesting a registration form.



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Millions invested in Dungeness flood defences

DUNGENESS has taken delivery of the final part of its £5 million flood defences.

Once in place, the rock armour – massive boulders lining the shore – will signal the end of the project to upgrade existing flooding defences. The rocks will protect against extreme weather events which, although unlikely to happen, need to be planned for.

Martin Pearson, Dungeness B station director, said: "The site has many existing layers of protection against flooding and has always been protected against storms.

"The rock armour and other enhancements to our existing defences will help protect us against even more severe weather events."



MISSING: Pat Lamb on CCTV

Reckless slams Tories as 'backstreet lenders' after they threaten to sue him

by Sarah Linney

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KENT's Ukip MP Mark Reckless is gearing up for battle after his former party announced it planned to sue him for thousands of pounds.

Rochester and Strood Conservative Association has issued a County Court claim against Mr Reckless and his election agent, Chris Irvine, for £3,012.

The association says this is the money Mr Reckless allowed it to spend on campaign materials after he had secretly decided to move to Ukip.

But Mr Irvine has reacted with anger to a letter asking the pair to pay up and avoid a court hearing, which he says was hand-delivered to his home mid-morning on Christmas Day.

In an open letter to association chairman Andrew Mackness, he said: "This was both unnecessary and deeply upsetting to my family. It was petty, immature and nasty."



RECKLESS: "This is sour grapes"

He told KoS: "It's a bit like the Grinch Who Stole Christmas.

"I don't know what's going on in their heads. They are acting like backstreet money lenders, sending

demands on Christmas morning.

"We need to be setting better standards in public life."

The pair are now crowdfunding their response to the claim and have received donations from thousands of people. They have not confirmed what their response will be but are expected to contest it.

Mr Reckless, whose letter arrived before Christmas, added: "This is sour grapes.

"I don't think there's any basis for their claim and I think it is counter-productive - they need to move on.

"I am not allowing it to intrude into our family Christmas or New Year."

However, Mr Mackness said the letters were delivered two days before Christmas and were "amicable".

"If you owe someone money, you should pay up – it's the season of goodwill," he said.

"He should have had some consideration for all those people in the association who raised money and worked very hard."

Pet passport scheme to face overhaul

PETS coming into the UK via the Eurotunnel terminal in Folkestone and the Port of Dover are going to face tougher controls after the government announced changes to the Pet Travel Scheme.

The scheme allows people travelling from Europe to bring their dog, cat or ferret into the UK without the need for quarantine as long as they meet certain criteria.

These conditions are that the pet must have a microchip, a rabies vaccination, a pet passport or third country official veterinary certificate and a tapeworm treatment.

However, the government is now introducing tougher controls to the scheme. It is hoped these will clamp down on abuse of the system and also improve the security and traceability of animals travelling into the UK.

The changes include new pet passports which are harder to forge and a new minimum period of 12 weeks before a pet can be vaccinated against rabies.

Hundred charged in drink-drive campaign

POLICE have charged the 100th person after their December drink-drive crackdown.

David Griffin, of Hollow Lane, was arrested shortly after 6pm on December 28 after he was seen driving near his home by a police community support officer.

Griffin, 49, was taken into custody and later charged with drink-driving as well as driving without third party insurance. He will appear at Sevenoaks Magistrates' Court on February 13.

Chief inspector Tony Dyer said: "Of those we arrested last week, 34 were men and seven were women. The youngest was an 18 year-old man from Maidstone while the oldest was a 73 year-old man from Canterbury.

"In the early hours of December 29, our running total of drink-driving related incidents in December topped 150. The figure is down slightly on last year which is encouraging, as it shows people are getting the message around drink-driving.

"But of course we'll continue to target those who disregard the law as well as their own safety."

Immigrants blamed for racism by Shonk

COUNTY councillor Trevor Shonk has told a TV programme that Britain has become a racist country because of the number of immigrants being allowed to settle here.

Mr Shonk, who is a Ukip councillor for Kent County Council and Ramsgate Town Council, made the comments to the BBC's World at One programme.

He blamed the problem on the immigration policy of the Conservatives and Labour.

He said: "The two main parties have made the country racist because of the influx we have had. When I've done leaflets, every shopkeeper, whether they are Asian or English-born ... they're concerned about the influx. It hasn't been staggered; it's just overload. We haven't got the care homes, we haven't got the houses for our own."

The remarks come shortly after another Thanet Ukip member, Rozanne Duncan, was expelled from the party earlier this month after comments which were said to be 'jaw dropping' and which brought 'the party into disrepute'.

agenda

What will make next week's headlines...

Inflation-busting fare hike hits commuters

COMMUTERS' wallets will be hit once more, with rail firm South-eastern's latest hike in train fares.

The new prices came into effect on January 2, which will affect thousands of people returning to work next week after the Christmas break.

The rail company announced

that there would be a 2.2 per cent increase in the cost of season tickets and off-peak fares, the lowest increase in five years.

Those travelling from Sevenoaks to London saw an increase of 2.5 per cent, with their annual ticket fare rising from £3,208 to £3,288.

Annual tickets from Deal and



Dover Priory to London also rose, going from £5,012 to £5,136.

The government has said that the increased fares will fund rail modernisation.

Feast to famine as many look to a 'dry' January

MAIDSTONE Council is urging everyone to give up alcohol for a month during 'Dry January'.

The council is backing the challenge by Alcohol Concern and Public Health England, which is being led locally by the NHS West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group.

A survey from Dry January

2014 showed that 49% of participants lost weight and 62% slept better and had more energy during the day.

Council leader Annabelle Blackmore has made the pledge, and hopes others will do the same, touting the scheme as beneficial to health and well-being.

...also

Historic win for Whites?

DOVER Athletic could be entering a fourth round FA Cup match – if they have won the weekend's clash against Premiership side Crystal Palace.

If the team make it through, it will be the furthest they've made it in the competition.

Get ready for gym rush

THOUSANDS of new fitness fans are expected to flood gyms, as part of their New Year's resolution to get fit.

The beginning of January is traditionally one of the busiest times of year for the fitness industry, after the seasonal excess.

Fears for dumped pets

ANIMAL charities are prepared for an influx of unwanted animals following the festive period.

Despite annual campaigns, some people still give animals as gifts. Many are later abandoned.

KCC consultation ends

KENT County Council's consultation on the proposal to build a new primary school in Ebbsfleet will close at the beginning of next week.

To give your views on the proposed school, visit the council's website.

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One-in-seven drivers skip Dart Charge

Maria Chiorando

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FIGURES released by the Highways Agency show that 15 per cent of drivers have failed to pay the toll following changes to the payment system at the Dartford Crossing.

The new system – Dart Charge – came into force on November 30. The old toll booth system, where drivers stopped to pay, has been



GET HOME FASTER: Delays have lessened under the new system

replaced by free-flowing traffic and a remote payment scheme, monitored by cameras with number-plate recognition.

Building work to remove the booths has started, and is due to finish in spring, when the full benefits of the new system, which will cost more than £50m, will be felt.

Since Dart Charge launched, around two million crossings have been made during the 6am-10pm chargeable period. The Highways Agency says it had a target of 93 per cent of drivers paying the toll, but despite missing this a spokesman said the system was off to a “fantastic start”.

Dart Charge project director Nigel Gray said: “I’m really encouraged that more than a million vehicles have been registered for accounts.”

“Traffic flow is going well too – there has been a real improvement in journeys – especially southbound, where drivers no longer have to stop



DARTFORD CROSSING: Around 15 per cent of drivers have neglected to pay under the new system

at a barrier at all.”

Describing the introduction of Dart Charge as “a big change,” he also explained that there has been some leniency with the deadlines for the payment of fines.

He said: “We want to give all drivers the opportunity to pay and comply with the scheme.”

“That’s why the first penalty charge notice issued for any vehicle for non-payment of the charge will offer the driver an extra 14 days to pay - and to pay for any crossings they have made since.”

“This strikes the right balance between being clear to drivers they need to pay the Dart Charge and giving

them every opportunity to do so.”

Fines have now started to be issued to drivers who have not paid. These penalty charge notices include a warning letter giving the driver the extra time in which to pay their original crossing charge without a penalty.

In addition, any further crossings made in that vehicle can also be paid at the normal rate, as long as payment is received within the same period.

The changes are having a positive impact: the Highways Agency says that early data suggests drivers are already experiencing improvements, with average journey times between

7am and 7pm cut by more than nine minutes southbound, and more than four minutes northbound, when comparing the first two weeks of December and the end of November.

Drivers now should pay for the crossing online, by phone or at one of thousands of retail outlets nationwide, either in advance or by midnight the day after they have used the crossing. Payment can also be made in advance by post.

The quickest and easiest way to pay the Dart Charge – including paying for outstanding crossings – is online. The Dart Charge website works on almost any device, including smartphones and tablets.

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Dover dreaming of FA Cup glory

The game has been described as the biggest in the club's history. **Jamie Weir** takes a look at how Dover Athletic, who play Crystal Palace today at 1pm, made it to the third round of the FA Cup.

AS Dover Athletic walk onto their Crabble Road pitch today (January 4), dreams of a historic FA Cup victory against Premiership side Crystal Palace will be the only thing on the players' minds.

And rightly so, as this will be just the second time that Dover have made it through to the FA Cup third round proper in their history.

That fact alone makes the match a tantalising prospect, with the Whites certain to be fighting hard to stay in the world's best-known knock-out football competition.

And it could be the best possible time for an upset, with Crystal Palace currently sitting in the Premiership relegation zone after they lost three of their past six games, only managing draws for the other three.

The Eagles are also in a period of transition, after the board sacked boss Neil Warnock on December 27, appointing a caretaker manager to look after the club while they searched for

a full-time replacement. At the time of writing, it was expected that Alan Pardew would be in place as the new boss before the match.

And payday is also likely to be something for Vanarama Conference side Dover to savour too, win or lose. This is likely to be the richest ever prize for the Whites, with a cool £144,000 from the Football Association going to the club after it was announced that the game will be televised on BT Sport 1.

That will be stacked alongside the gate receipts from a sell-out crowd of almost 6,000, as well as the takings from merchandise, making the team around £250,000 for the match – and the promise of more money is likely to spur the club onwards.

Dover currently sit four tiers below Crystal Palace in the football league, making a win unlikely but, as football fans will know, not impossible.

If the Whites can pull off a giant killing, it would be a dream start to 2015 for the club.



CRABBLE ROAD: Will Dover triumph here over Crystal Palace?

DOVER'S JOURNEY TO FA CUP GLORY

THE Whites played their first-round match against League Two team Morecambe FC on November 8.

The team dominated throughout the match, despite the 1-0 scoreline which failed to do their performance justice. It was Stefan Payne who saw Dover through to the second round of the cup with his goal just before half time.

It was almost a month before Dover sealed the deal again in their second-round match against Cheltenham Town on December 7.

The 83rd minute saw skipper Connor Essam secure a place in the third round for the team, blasting a shot low through the Cheltenham defence and finding the back of the net with the solitary goal of the match.

Manager Chris Kinnear called the team 'magnificent' in the aftermath, despite the team failing to perform at the same level as they had in previous matches.

■ For a full report of the match and reaction on how Dover got on, see next week's Kent on Sunday.



FA CUP: Could Dover lift it?

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600 X 1200 SC	£39.59	600 X 800 DC	£50.56
600 X 1300 SC	£44.51	600 X 900 DC	£56.82
600 X 600 P+.....	£31.36	600 X 1000 DC	£63.12
600 X 700 P+.....	£23.41	600 X 1100 DC	£69.41
600 X 800 P+.....	£41.70	600 X 1200 DC	£75.76
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Warning of 'drone' air threat to Dungeness

Nuclear power plants, like the one at Dungeness, are potentially vulnerable to terrorist strikes using 'drones', according to a new report into the security threats posed by the remote control flying vehicles. **Jamie Weir** finds out more...

A NEW report by British nuclear expert John Large, commissioned by Greenpeace France, examines some of the potential threats to nuclear power stations from drones used by terrorist groups.

Mr Large says that there are a number of key security vulnerabilities at power stations in the UK which could be exploited by drones - and that Dungeness could be particularly at threat due to the way it disposes of its fuel.

While researching the report, Mr Large examined a variety of scenarios which power stations may face.

These attack scenarios included unauthorised drone access to the spent fuel building and a drone aiding and abetting an insider saboteur, taking them supplies which could be used to damage the power station. The report concluded that were these scenarios to occur, each of them could result in a radioactive release and what is described in the report as "intolerable radiological consequences in the off-site public domain."

Mr Large said: "When I wrote the report, I took a standard nuclear power plant and subjected it to five different scenarios which used commercially available drones.

"If that test was applied to Dungeness then there would have been a number of areas of concern."

One of the problems at the Dungeness power station, according to Mr Large, are the spent fuel pods - where fuel rods which have reached the end of their useful life are stored until they are transported away for disposal.

While in storage, the rods have to be continuously cooled to ensure they don't overheat.

"The classic scenario would be a terrorist group using drones to disrupt the cooling system for the pods. This could lead to serious problems, and potential risks to the

public," explained Mr Large.

And he is no stranger to the power station in Dungeness either - in fact, he has a fairly intimate knowledge of the station and the area around it after he gave expert testimony to the Lydd Airport inquiry, stating that the expansion of the airport could pose security risks to the nuclear plant.

During that inquiry, Mr Large spoke about the potential dangers which could be faced due to the rail system Dungeness uses to transport spent nuclear fuel away from the site. He believes that this could also pose a significant security threat if drones were to be used by a malevolent group.

Mr Large said: "Dungeness warrants a proper and thorough investigation.

"When I gave evidence at the Lydd inquiry, one of the issues I came across was that spent fuel travels via a train. The fuel flask could quite easily be vulnerable to attack while on the train, particularly as when it is being loaded up, the train often sits there stationary for some time with very little in the way of security."

The report was commissioned after a series of co-ordinated flights of drones over French nuclear installations.

While the flights over the French reactors are not thought to have any malicious intent - three radio-controlled-aircraft hobbyists were arrested and released in one case - the fact that they have taken place has been enough to spark concern from the French authorities.

Mr Large has given public evidence to the French Parliament on the issue, during which he made the point that when the nuclear power stations were first designed, the threat of drones, and "near-cyborg technology", was not present.

He told KoS: "Dungeness was designed in a time before a threat like this existed, which is why it is vulnerable to this kind of attack.



DRONES: As they become more and more popular with enthusiasts, they are becoming more sophisticated



DUNGENESS: New report says the power station could come under threat from drones used by terrorist groups

"While the flights in France don't appear to have had any mischievous intent and have been made simply for unknown groups to find out if it is possible for them to do it, it could lead to other dangerous attempts."

Despite that, EDF Energy - which runs the Dungeness power station - say that it is safe from the threat of drones.

An EDF Energy spokesperson said: "All of Britain's nuclear power stations are designed with safety in mind and are stress-tested to withstand a vast range of potential incidents. The independent regulator continuously monitors and evaluates the safety of each plant alongside the operator to protect it from any outside threats."

However, the popularity of drones is on the rise in the UK, with greater numbers of enthusiasts taking to the skies using readily available flying machines which are becoming increasingly capable and sophisticated.

The drones which Mr Large looked at are commercially available, costing just hundreds of pounds, though more expensive types have greater capabilities to carry heavier loads and fly over greater ranges.

Some types of 'racing drones' can also fly at very high speeds - up to 80

mph in some cases, making them not only difficult to detect, but also difficult to protect against.

This proliferation of drones even caused the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to issue a safety warning over Christmas due to the flying machines' popularity as presents.

The CAA is the UK's specialist aviation regulator, defining where aerial vehicles can go, and setting rules for pilots.

Nuclear power stations are restricted airspace under the CAA's rules, something which EDF Energy says ensures security.

The spokesperson added: "Breaches of the restrictions are enforced by the CAA.

"Any use of drones over a UK nuclear power station is an offence under CAA legislation and prosecutions would follow."

Despite a number of fairly comprehensive rules for drone usage, there have only been two successful prosecutions of drone pilots in the UK - both in 2014.

This, says 37-year-old drone enthusiast Chris Thompson, is because the vast majority of people who use them ensure they are complying with the rules.

But Mr Thompson, who lives in

Sevenoaks, told KoS that as more people took to the skies using drones, there was potential for more illegal activity.

He said: "Almost all drone users are actively engaged in ensuring they conform to the rules laid out by the CAA.

"There are clear guidelines to let you know exactly what you can and cannot do, so I don't think that there should be any problem with people using drones legally.

"I think that the problem with people using them illegally comes when people either don't know about the rules, or choose to flout them.

"The attack scenarios being described can't really be helped by clamping down on drone enthusiasts in my view, because those people aren't the problem."

The Department for Energy and Climate Change is the government department responsible for the UK's nuclear safety and security.

A departmental spokesman told KoS that security is reviewed frequently.

He said: "Nuclear safety and security are top priorities for the Government. Site security covers all facets of physical, personnel and information security."

Save up to nine lives by joining the organ donation register

Three people waiting for an organ transplant die every day. In a bid to cut the figure, a major campaign has been launched to encourage more of us to join the organ donation register. **Maria Chiorando** finds out more...

AROUND 7,000 people in the UK are currently waiting for an organ transplant – with three people dying everyday before getting the operation they need.

Despite a general upward trend in the number of people receiving donations, this still equals around 1,000 deaths a year.

Because of this, the government has launched a campaign (see box) to encourage more people to join the organ donation register.

More than 20.8 million people in the UK have so far signed on to the NHS register, which records the details of people who have registered their wishes to donate organs and/or tissue after their death for transplantation.

Anyone can join the organ donation register. Age isn't a barrier to being an organ or tissue donor and neither are most medical conditions. People in their 70s and 80s have become donors and saved many lives.

The government has said it is 'committed to boosting numbers on the organ donor register to save more lives'.

That's why, due to a drive by cabinet office minister Grant Shapps, people are now prompted to join the register when they apply online for services such as applying for passports, registering to vote, booking a practical driving test, renewing their Oyster card or going over to contactless payment with Transport for London.

This is in addition to people who already see a prompt when renewing

their driving licence or tax disc online.

Following a trial on the DVLA website that resulted in more than 830,000 people signing up to the register, the government is now in discussions with various other organisations about the possibility of further online promotion of the register.

In October alone, the pages on the government's gov.uk website which have links to the organ donation register were seen 165,000 times.

Mr Shapps said: "People die needlessly every year due to a shortage of organs – something that could be avoided simply by encouraging more people to join the organ donation register."

"That's why I have spoken to the Prime Minister and colleagues across government to ask for their help in making it easier for people to sign up to donate their organs and save more lives."

Graham Donnelly, 36, from Gravesend, had a heart transplant two years ago after being diagnosed with dilated cardiomyopathy tachycardia.

This is a disease in which the heart becomes weakened and enlarged and cannot pump blood efficiently. The decreased heart function can affect the lungs, liver, and other organs.

He said: "It is fair to say that the transplant saved my life – I would not be here today without it."

"Knowing that people die waiting for these operations did make me feel guilty – I was one of the lucky ones."

"I think that signing the register is a fantastic thing to do, and would urge everyone to do it."

"I think that some people feel a bit



SIGN UP: More than 20 million people are on the UK's donor register

strange about the idea of their organs in another person's body, but from my point of view as someone who has received an organ, I can honestly say that the gratitude I feel – and the respect I treat my new heart with – should negate any misgivings."

The government is also urging more families to have a discussion about their organ donation wishes so that more transplants can be carried out.

Mr Donnelly said: "I think the idea of discussing organ donation with the family is a really good one."

"Figures show families are more likely to agree to donation going ahead if they know it is what their loved one wanted."

"I think people are sometimes surprised to find out that a close relative was a donor, and it can be overwhelming."

"So discussing it openly, and bringing it into conversation can only be a good thing."

According to government statistics, in the last year, more than 40 per cent of families approached about organ donation said 'no' to donating a loved one's organs.

However, 95 per cent of families said 'yes' when their loved one's decision to donate was known through their being on the NHS register and having had a discussion with them.

In January 2013, the Government ran a trial to see what would influence more people to register as organ donors.



LIFESAVING: Around 7,000 people in the UK are waiting for an organ transplant. Three people each day die while they are waiting

It worked with the DVLA and the NHS, trialling different words and visual prompts to determine which ones increased the likelihood of people choosing to follow a link to sign up.

Results showed that asking people to put themselves in someone else's

position had the greatest impact on behaviour.

Public health minister Jane Ellison said: "I would urge everyone to think about joining the NHS organ donor register as it would make a huge difference. One donor can save or transform up to nine lives."

WHAT IS THE NEW ONLINE CAMPAIGN?

CELEBRITIES ranging from footballer Sol Campbell to London Mayor Boris Johnson have lent their support to an online campaign to raise awareness about organ donation.

According to government figures, 4,000 people are spending their second Christmas or more waiting for a life-saving organ transplant.

The campaign asked people to post a picture of their Christmas list online, made up of three wishes – two supporting organ donation and one fun wish – using the hashtag #donationwish.

People are also encouraged to let their loved ones know that they

want to be an organ donor and help to save lives.

Graham Donnelly, from Gravesend, said: "This campaign is fantastic."

"It's all too easy to want loads of gifts at Christmas, but when you are in a life and death situation, you develop a totally different perspective."

"I know this sounds clichéd, but for me I found that a lot of material possessions just didn't have the same importance as before, so looking at it at this time of year helps to put it in perspective."

"I think that more and more people are becoming more interested in being donors, which is great."



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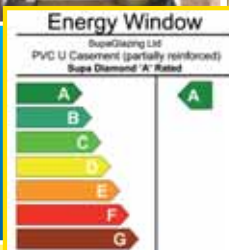
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ON THE RUN: Sevenoaks AC's event at Knole Park is a very popular race

On your marks and get set... to get fit this year

Piled on a few pounds over Christmas and looking for a way to get rid of them? Try running, it will get you fit and it's now so popular the country is holding more races than ever before. **Chris Murphy** finds out more...

RUNNING has always been popular and the London Olympics attracted a whole lot more people to the sport.

And with the New Year here, many of us will be tempted to dig out our trainers and try to lose a few festive season pounds.

And that's a good thing because the more exercise we take, the healthier we get.

As diets come and go, frustrated doctors still say the best way to avoid becoming overweight and possibly suffering a heart attack and having to start dealing with diabetes, is to stop eating junk and get out there and do some exercise.

Too much food compared to the amount of exercise done means we pile on the pounds.

The easiest way to stay fit is to simply get out of the house and walk about. Once that's a become routine, try running a bit. And then join a club and do it with other people to stem the inevitable boredom of pounding the streets alone.

There are dozens of running clubs in Kent, and we approached some of them to ask about their philosophy, and why running is gaining momentum.

Barrington Watson helps runs the South Kent Harriers, which is a little more serious about its running and can help those just starting out to those needing some coaching to become more competitive.

He said: "The club was formed in 1987 to be a competitive team that could be successful both locally and nationally. The founder members were local runners who wanted to see how they would fare as a team. Just seven members were in the original SKH and now there's 35. We are small but effective."

"The first race they did as a club in October was the Harlow Marathon which they won overall and so, in their first competition, they became Southern Counties Marathon champions."

"Overall team wins quickly followed with a win in the Worthing 20 which again made them Southern Counties winners. The overall winner was one of the founder members."

"Up until the early 2000s there were many wins. However, the runners were getting older and successes fewer. At one time the club's future looked to be in doubt. Luckily Irish international cross country international John Cream set about a revival in 2010."

"The comeback race was the Ashford 10k which resulted in a resounding team victory. More successes followed and the club has recently won the East Kent road relays. This comprises of a series of 4 x 3-mile races involving all the local clubs."

"The club still likes to do well but now has a very successful beginner's group called Barbara's Beginners, which meet twice a week. Nobody is too slow and there are qualified

coaches on hand to help."

Peter Yarlett is chairman of the Canterbury Harriers, which was formed in 1993. Just 40 people joined that year, but it has now grown to 150 runners.

He told us: "Harriers has seen an increase in the numbers of female runners taking part in running generally and this is also reflected in our membership profile.

"Harriers have many more veteran age, which are the over 40s, and also runners continuing well into their 60s. We also encourage our club to be a social community of runners as well as a fitness activity.

"We have a vision statement of ambitions that includes achieve the highest possible placing in the Kent Fitness League team and individual categories; and encourage members to take part in other cross-country and local road races.

"Plus we need to provide first class training opportunities to all members and continue to support the Demelza children's charity as the main club charity."

He added: "We provide a range of Harriers social events throughout the year that members value and encourage the involvement of members in committee roles and club work in general. The club continue to provide a high class Whitstable 10K road race that is well received, achieves quality feedback from competitors and returns a surplus for club funds.

"As well as boosting fitness, we also create a warm, positive and welcoming club atmosphere to members and new members alike, irrespective of anyone's fitness level and ability."

Getting things organised can help with smooth running for everyone.



AND THEY'RE OFF: The annual Kent Roadrunner Marathon takes place at the multi-million pound Cyclopark venue in north-west Kent.

Mark Hookway is from Tonbridge Athletic Club, which started just after the Second World War with about 20 members, and now has more than 800. It puts its success down to its team of dedicated coaches.

Mark told us: "A good management committee, which gives a strong structure behind the scenes, is vital.

"And we also need plenty of volun-

teer help – for instance, we hosted a Kent Cross Country League fixture and had about 50 people supply help with course marshalling, car parking, refreshments, first aid, course layout and so on.

"Local media support is essential too, plus good websites and communication with members and potential members. As people start to get a lit-

tle more serious about their fitness and running activities, they need to see good results which help spread the word and attract new members, especially at National Championship level.

"To that end, our typical Tonbridge AC training sessions are well attended by all ages keen to maintain or improve their fitness levels. The senior

men's team is now getting consistent top ten placings in UK championships, such as the National Cross Country and Road Relays."

Jim Knight at Sevenoaks Athletic Club said: "We are a thriving club with 200 members – 120 seniors and 80 juniors.

"Our numbers have increased in the past two years, and the main rea-

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sons are probably post-Olympic interest in athletics and running, plus an increased desire to take exercise and get fit.

"The club is open to all ages and abilities. We train during the week and at weekends, with a mixture of road running, track sessions, hill runs and trail runs. Our coaches and run-leaders cater for the gentle joggers to the county standard athletes.

"We are very active, with a monthly handicap race, a monthly social, and we host two races each year – a Kent Fitness League race and the Sevenoaks 7, which raises money for the Dame Kelly Holmes Trust.

"We have some of the finest training areas in the country, including the 1,000-acre Knole Park and many miles of footpaths through the glorious Kent countryside. What binds us together is our love of running."

For those interested in more serious and gruelling events, there is little to rival the traditional 26-mile marathon.

Ian Berry is race director of the Kent Roadrunner Marathon at the end of May, and also the National 50K and National 100K races.

He told us: "We held a test event for just 21 runners in April 2012, before the Cyclopark venue was officially opened. This allowed us to launch successfully with our first full event in June 2012. We'll stage our fourth annual Kent Roadrunner Marathon in May 2015.

"We had 187 finishers at the first full Kent Roadrunner Marathon and then all entries for the 2013 event sold-out with a few weeks to go.

"In 2014, we sold out two months before race day, and in 2015 we've sold out five months before race day.

For all three years we've had almost 400 starters.

"Our event has grown hugely in popularity, with our positive reputation spreading widely on social media. The race is organised by runners and we know what other runners like – we have the largest finishers' medal in the UK, free professional race photographs, a fast traffic-free course and a fabulous venue. We strive to send everybody home with a brilliant experience of their day, and our string of race awards have proven we're doing it right.

"There have never been more running races held across the country than there are now. Runners have great choice of race distances, venues and styles of races.

"It's important for new races to find a niche and excel at that. We're known for our amazing medals, brilliant venue and our 'showboating competition' and those have been key to our success.

"In 2014 we were invited to organise the British Athletics National 100K Championships, which again proved to be a great success with the winner, Steve Way, running an all-time 100K British record at our event at Cyclopark.

"We are delighted to stage these events at Cyclopark and bring runners from across the country to north-west Kent. The venue has been brilliant for us, and our runners have really helped the local economy. It's been such a great project for everyone."

Or for the ultimate in fitness, how about taking on a triathlon?

Navin Nauth-Misir, is the chairman of the Ashford Tri Club. He said: "Myself and five others founded the



ON TRACK, WATER OR ROAD: Ashford Tri Club members at a recent meeting.



TEAM SPIRIT: Kent Fitness League athletes from Sevenoaks AC.

club in 2005. We started with five members and built gradually in the first year to about 30 members and currently we have about 105 members.

"Triathlon has increased in popularity and there are many more events being staged including pool-based events for beginners or those wanting to try their hand at triathlon.

"The London Olympics also raised

the profile of the sport with the medal-winning performance of GB triathletes, the Brownlee brothers.

"Ashford Tri Club is an inclusive and friendly club and we encourage members at all levels from complete beginners through to seasoned veterans and at all distances from sprint which is a 400m swim, 20km bike, and 5k run, through to IronMan which is a 3,800m swim, 180km bike, and 42.2km run.

"We compete locally, nationally and internationally with a number of members representing GB.

"We have a great team of coaches and we provide a wide range of coached sessions for our members and we also develop coaches to further the sport.

"As we are now celebrating our 10th anniversary, we intend to put on some events to celebrate."

So, go on. Give it a go!

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MS Therapy Centre opens thanks to £1.3m campaign

After a tireless 12-year, £1.3 million fundraising campaign, Kent's new Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre opens tomorrow (Monday) in Canterbury. **Sarah Linney** – who covered the early stages of the campaign a decade ago – reports on a dream finally come to fruition.

Sarah Linney

sarah.linney@archant.co.uk

THERE'S nothing like reporting on a story which you first covered as a junior reporter ten years ago to make you feel like you're getting on a bit.

Or to make you realise quite how epic a campaign has been. And there really is no other adjective for the decade-long fundraising marathon which has finally given Kent a new therapy centre for multiple sclerosis sufferers.

It has taken campaigners from the Kent MS Therapy Centre, in Merton Lane, Canterbury, 12 years to raise the £1.3 million needed for the hi-tech new building, which opens tomorrow (Monday) and will provide a range of therapies for sufferers from across the county.

It is next to the old centre but, as the charity's MS support manager Karen Middlemiss explains, the new building is definitely a step up.

"The old centre is a portable building that was built 30 years ago and was supposed to have a lifespan of 15 years," she explained.

"The roof leaks, the floor gets wet and none of the doors close properly. We've been very limited in what we can provide for people - the new centre is much bigger."

"But the old centre has served us well. It's tiny and shabby but it has a great big heart."

The old centre hasn't, in fact, done too badly at all. Its 400 members have had access to individual physiotherapy, hyperbaric oxygen therapy – breathing in pure oxygen under pressure to help heal damage caused by leaking blood vessels – counselling, hypnotherapy and clinics with nurses and podiatrists.

Around 150 people – not all of them members (the oxygen therapy, for example, is open to people with other conditions who could benefit from it) – have used it each week.

As well as everything the old centre did, the new centre will have a hydrotherapy pool – a warm pool where

sufferers can exercise with a physiotherapist – a gym and a large room for group physiotherapy and exercise classes, including yoga, pilates and t'ai chi.

There will also be more therapy rooms, allowing the centre to offer reflexology, acupuncture, Indian head massage and body massage daily instead of two or three times a week; a fundraising shop, coffee shop and large social area; and an upstairs that can be used for fundraising events or hired out. Information days and carers' support groups are also planned.

"Physiotherapy can help improve fatigue, walking and posture, while massage can help loosen muscles and make it easier to walk," Mrs Middlemiss explained.

"Acupuncture is great for pain, while counselling lets people talk."

So just what did the campaigners – whose diligence was such that they actually ended up raising £300,000 more than they needed – do to gather the cash?

"A lot of our members helped. We held quiz nights, coffee mornings, a



BIGGER: The new centre will have space for events

skydive - just about every fundraising event possible," Mrs Middlemiss recalled.

"We have been so fortunate in the people we have met. We contacted Reach [an organisation through which professionals use their skills to help charities], and they helped us get grants from trust funds like the Bradbury Foundation, who gave us £175,000 – they did a fantastic job."

"One of our members, Mary Daly, raised £23,000 by running the London Marathon and holding a fundraising ball. She has been incredible – at one point she was in a wheelchair and couldn't walk."

Huge support also came from the charity's patron, Brake Brothers founder Frank Brake, who pledged to match every pound raised over two years – donating a total of £500,000.

"Lots more people wanted to get involved than as they knew every pound would be doubled," Mrs Middlemiss added.

"About four years ago, we had only raised a few hundred thousand pounds and for a very long period it just felt like a bit of a pipedream. I always felt positive, but it was a long slog - then in the last four years it really accelerated."

"I can't believe that we are moving



YOU MAKE ME FEEL BRAND NEW: The £1.3 million Kent MS Therapy Centre opens on Monday



next week. It will make a real difference to our members' quality of life - thanks to the generosity and efforts of so many people, we're going from economy class to business class."

Of course, at the same time as raising cash for the new centre, the charity also had to maintain the old one - which needed around £100,000 a year to keep going (the new one will need around £150,000 a year).

"We receive no government funding, so we just have to roll our sleeves up and get on with it," Mrs Middlemiss added.

"People say we are so good at juggling we should join a circus."

All the centre's members have been invited to celebrate the opening tomorrow with cake and a toast.

"It's their centre," Mrs Middlemiss said.

"The need for our services is increasing all the time, because the technology for diagnosing people has got better. On average between 15 and 20 people in the area are diagnosed each month, and we get around seven new members a month.

"The fundraising doesn't stop. We

have to keep our feet firmly on the pedal."

And she urged anyone affected by MS, whether as a sufferer, carer, family member or friend, to get in touch.

There are also plenty of opportunities for volunteering at the centre, from helping to run the hyperbaric chamber to assisting with admin, working in the shop, fundraising or just making tea and coffee.

"We do like to give first refusal for volunteering to people with MS, as many of them are no longer able to work and it gives them a sense of pur-

pose," Mrs Middlemiss explained.

"You can still have a good quality of life with MS. Some people say it's not necessarily the therapy here that's made a difference, it's the support and the people. Often when a person's diagnosed, they don't know anyone with MS. But they can come here and be among friends, among people who understand.

"Everyone comments on the atmosphere here. It's so positive and there's such camaraderie. It's a unique place."

The centre in Canterbury can be

contacted on 01227 470876.

■ Want to help? Then vote for the Kent MS Therapy Centre to win a minibus.

The centre has been shortlisted along with two other charities to win a minibus from the Axis Foundation, and the winner is being chosen through a public vote.

"A minibus would be a lifeline to all those in Kent who are no longer able to drive due to the disabling effects of MS," Mrs Middlemiss explained.

To vote, go to www.axisfoundation.org/minibus before January 9.

WHEN Louise O'Boyle was diagnosed with MS at the age of 27, she knew nothing about the condition that had been giving her bizarre symptoms for a good couple of years.

"I was diagnosed in February 2003, but I probably had it for longer than that. My balance wasn't right and I would get double vision - I would be walking around like I was drunk," recalled Louise, from Canterbury.

"But it never lasted very long and I didn't put two and two together. I had never heard of MS - I thought it was a brain tumour. My doctor and husband figured it out.

"At first I managed to hide it very well. I wore high heels and just ignored it."

But after the birth of her son Finn in 2005, Louise (right, with Finn) suffered a debilitating relapse.

"I had breezed through my pregnancy, but during the relapse I couldn't walk. I couldn't take Finn

out - I couldn't even carry him up and down the stairs," she said.

"I couldn't do any housework. I couldn't stand up in the shower, or wash my own hair - I couldn't even get dressed. I slept when Finn slept.

"It was horrible. It lasted for about three months, and I felt like the worst mum in the world."

Mercifully Louise, who works part-time in Florrie's tearoom in Bridge, has not suffered such a bad relapse since.

"I have had a couple of blips where I have been in bed for a week or two weeks - I have been up and down, but I am one of the luckier ones," she added.

"MS affects everyone in different ways."

She says that the treatment and support she has received at the Kent MS Therapy Centre - where she helps to run the hyperbaric oxygen chamber - has been excellent.

"All the treatments are brilliant,

and the place has such a happy feel," Louise said.

"There is no misery here. Everyone's smiling and messing around. You can be yourself and not feel awkward - people don't ask why you are walking with a stick when you are young.

"It offers so much, and the new centre looks fantastic and is going to offer so much more. I couldn't be more excited about it."

And she echoed Mrs Middlemiss's plea for anyone affected by MS to get in touch with the centre.

"You see other people coping, and you get tips from them on how to cope," Louise said.

"MS is a scary disease, but it's not a death sentence or the end of the world. You can come here and get treatment and feel better.

"So don't panic - come in and have a chat. You get so much support here from people who want to help."



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COME ON IN, THE WATER'S FINE: MS sufferers can exercise with a physiotherapist in the warm hydrotherapy pool

WHAT IS MS?

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS is an autoimmune disease which affects around 100,000 people in the UK.

In MS, the body's immune system starts attacking the protective coating around the nerve fibres, called myelin, which damages the nerves and causes a wide range of symptoms.

The symptoms are different in every sufferer but can include fatigue, problems with vision, difficulties with walking and balance, spasms, trouble concentrating and short-term memory loss.

There are two kinds of MS: relapsing remitting MS, in which people experience sudden attacks of symptoms which then gradually get better. This affects about 85 per cent of sufferers.

In primary progressive MS, however, sufferers experience symptoms which gradually get worse over time. People affected by relapsing remitting MS may go on to develop progressive symptoms.

MS is normally diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 40, and affects three times as many women as men.

No cure has been found yet, but many treatments are available to help alleviate the condition, from drug treatments and physiotherapy to alternative therapies.

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So what happens to our Christmas trees?

Most of us have had one and now our thoughts are turning to the prickly problem of what to do with our Christmas tree... that annual visitor who invariably overstays their yuletide welcome. **Chris Murphy** finds out what happens to all those firs and pines.

COUNCILS don't keep accurate record, but across Kent they help recycle thousands of Christmas trees every year.

What happens to the remains is particularly green as most of what is chipped is then recycled. Some, like Ashford, have sold on the branches and trunks to raise cash for charity.

Canterbury City Council said: "We collect from the doorstep. The tree collection is on the resident's scheduled garden waste day between 6 and 20 January.

"Trees are composted. Collecting them also saves the resident a trip to the tip, so it reduces their hassle too.

"We don't keep a running tally, but it is definitely in the hundreds."

In Ashford, the council is asking residents to donating their tree to Pilgrims Hospices as it is running its popular Treecycling scheme again.

The community-run service, which last year raised £8,000, sees volunteers collect old Christmas trees from homes in exchange for a small donation.

Cllr Jessamy Blanford, Ashford Borough Council's portfolio holder for the environment, said: "Once again we are pleased to support the Pilgrims Hospices Treecycling scheme. We are delighted that the service has branched out to cover the entire Ashford Borough. It gives more of our residents the opportunity to support this excellent charity and also dispose of their Christmas tree in an eco-friendly way."

And Pam Meller, regional fundraising manager at Pilgrims Hospices, added: "We were thrilled last year that despite a suggested donation amount of £5, the average donation given was £10 and I think this demonstrates the goodwill of the local community in

supporting their local hospice. We are grateful for this continued support."

Tonbridge and Malling said they are also unsure of exact numbers, but added: "We don't know how many residents will put them out until we collect them after Christmas but even then as they are co-collected with garden waste, food waste and cards.

"But any trees collected by us are delivered to the in-vessel composting facility at Blaise Farm and used to make soil improver.

"Residents with a compost heap may want to compost their real tree on it, rather than having it collected. However, our collection service caters also for those who don't have compost heaps, as well as composting the tree down quicker than on a home compost heap.

"Christmas generates a lot of extra rubbish, but much of it can be recycled or composted.



"For every tonne of recycling collected from our green box scheme, £1 is donated to the Kent Air Ambulance Service – last year, this was over £3,500.

"Residents can compost their real Christmas trees by placing them in or next to their green-lidded bin. Residents can also recycle cardboard, plain Christmas cards but no plastic or glitter, and all leftover food such as turkey bones and sprouts.

"As Christmas trees will be shredded at the composting facility, large trees may cause damage to the shredding equipment. Generally, any tree up to six feet in length and with a trunk up to three inches in diameter can be placed out whole for collection. Any tree longer or thicker than this should be cut up into smaller sections.

Residents may also take their Christmas trees to be recycled at one of the Household Waste Recycling

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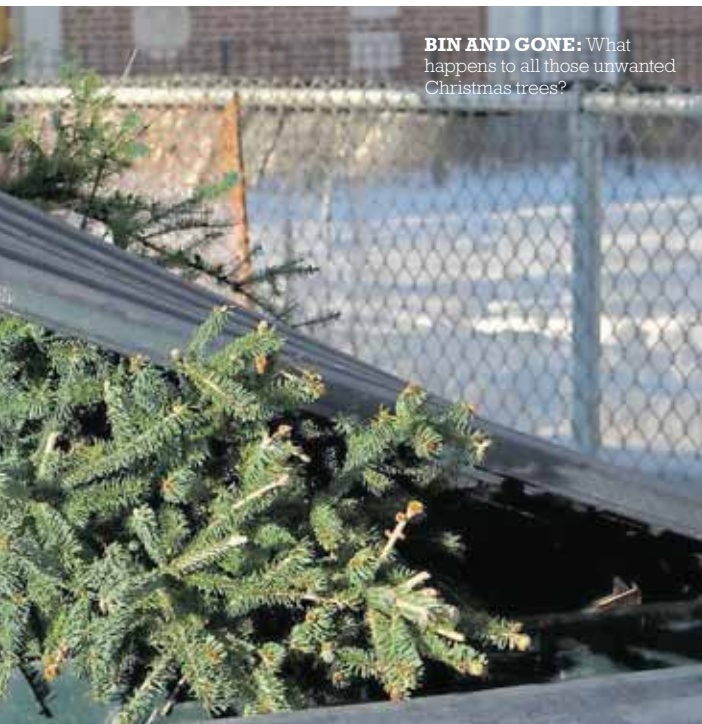
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BIN AND GONE: What happens to all those unwanted Christmas trees?

Centres at Tovil, Maidstone; North Farm, Tunbridge Wells; and Sundridge, Sevenoaks. These are run by Kent County Council, or at Cuxton, run by Medway Council. Trees will be shredded and composted.

Glass bottles, jars, plastic bottles, pots, tubs and trays can be recycled at the recycling banks around Tonbridge and Malling.

Maidstone council said: "We ask residents to put their Christmas tree

out with their garden waste bin, or take them to the household waste recycling centre in Tovil. Any trees that we collect are taken to the composting facilities at Kings Hill or Sittingbourne, where they are turned into soil improver along with other garden waste.

"While we prefer residents to compost at home wherever possible as it reduces transport and is the most sustainable form of recycling, given the



size of the trees they would need to be shredded in order to compost, so we wouldn't recommend it just being thrown on a compost heap as it will take a very long time to breakdown."

At Dover council, a spokesman said: "Residents who subscribe to our garden waste service can recycle their real Christmas trees from the boundary of their property by placing the tree out between 5-30 January on their garden waste collection day. Christmas trees can also be recycled at KCC household waste recycling centres in the district."

Sevenoaks council can collect and recycle real Christmas tree for free so long as they have a trunk of up to 90mm in diameter.

This happens with its scheduled garden waste collection service until the end of the month.

The council said: "Simply leave your tree by the boundary of your property, where you'd usually put your refuse and recycling sacks, by 7am on the day

IS IT WORTH IT?

AMAZINGLY, it seems some people still need reminding artificial trees cannot be recycled. But all real ones can, and it can save thousands of tons of pointless landfill if we all make the effort.

Oh, and take the decs off too.

The recyclenow website says: "Simply remove all the decorations and tinsel from the tree, remove it from the pot or stand and take it to a collection point.

"This is usually the boundary of your property or a designated communal point."

It added: "Trees are usually shredded into chippings which are then used locally in parks or woodland areas."

OK, so you do have an artificial tree which is past its best, what can be done with that? Recyclenow said not a lot really: "Due to the combination of materials used to make an artificial tree you are unable to recycle it.

"However, if in good condition, you could ask friends and family if they want it, advertise it on an exchange website or donate it to charity."

our garden service visits your road.

"All the trees we collect are turned into environmentally-friendly compost and it's for this reason we cannot take trees which are decorated or in pots or stands."

Gravesham council said wrapping paper and cards go in the recycling bin or recycling bag, but real Christmas trees need to go to the tip at Pepperhill.

Residents with a brown garden waste bin can put in there. The tree will need to be cut up or put out on your refuse collection day with one of our green garden waste tickets attached.

Artificial Christmas trees can be taken to the tip at Pepperhill or booked on a bulky collection. Smaller ones can be put in a black bag.

In Medway, a council spokesman said: "We collect Christmas trees from the kerbside along with residents garden and food waste. We advise residents to leave their whole tree next to their brown wheelie bin or brown gar-

den sacks for collection. Christmas Trees can also be taken to any of the three household waste and recycling centres.

"Those collected go to a composting facility at Sittingbourne where they are shredded along with food and garden waste. This is then composted inside temperature-controlled bunkers for one week where it reaches 70 degrees centigrade. The product is then left to mature for 6-8 weeks before being used as a soil improver on Kent farms.

"Christmas trees taken to the Household waste and recycling centres go through a similar process and the product used for similar applications but, in the absence of food waste being mixed in with them, can be composted in open air.

"We don't have a specific estimate of how many trees are in Medway, but with just over 110,000 homes it would be reasonable to suggest we will collect several thousand trees."

I Sissinghurst Castle

Shake off the cobwebs and kick the leaves with a visit to Sissinghurst Castle Garden this January and February. Learn more about the history hidden in the walls and see behind the garden gate with a Winter tour or pop in for some retail therapy and a cuppa.

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Success for Kent's stores as shoppers bag their bargains

With stores opening as early as 6am and hundreds leaving the comfort of their homes to shop for bargains, it would appear the county's love affair with the Boxing Day sales is alive and well, as **Molly Kersey** discovers...

DESPITE Black Friday's emergence as a major shopping day across the country, the Boxing Day sales still seem to hold an attraction for many of us.

December 26 first became a significant trading day some eight years ago and has since become an established day in the retail calendar, with many stores choosing to begin their clearances then.

And while figures indicate that fewer people in the UK hit the shops this year than in 2013, stores are still holding up well against sales launched by online retailers.

The Retail Traffic Index, the barometer of footfall compiled by Ipsos Retail Performance, was down by 4.7 per cent compared with last year.

However, traditional sales favourite Bluewater fared well.

Footfall at the shopping centre in Greenhithe slipped by only 1.9 per cent and a huge number of consumers arrived last Friday to hunt for bargains.

Many of the retailers reduced their prices by some 50 per cent on the day.

General manager Robert Goodman said: "It has been a fantastic Boxing Day at Bluewater, contributing to a record year of sales since we opened in 1999.

"The majority of our guests were families who took advantage of wonderful offers from Bluewater's unique line-up of leading UK and international brands and then made a real day of it.

"With a stellar line-up of stores including John Lewis, Victoria's Secret, American Eagle, White Stuff, Mappin & Webb, GAME, The Disney Store, adidas Homecourt, Steamer Trading Cookshop and Jo Malone, Bluewater is a great alternative to central London."

The first shoppers started queuing at the eye-wateringly early time of 4am, for the 6am opening of clothing store Next.

Coffee shops laid out food and hot drinks to help customers pass the time before the opening ... and staff noticed a change in their behaviour. Customers had been able to select their bargains online, before collecting them during the sales period.

Mr Goodman explained: "This year, there has been an evident rise in 'calm and collected' shoppers using our retailers' click and collect services to plan their bargain purchases.



REDUCTIONS: Even before Christmas, some stores slashed prices

"Guests are then using that time saved to mix shopping with dining at our 60-plus restaurants and cafes, ice skating at Winter Wonderland and catching one of the family blockbuster releases at our IMAX.

"We have seen that for Bluewater guests it is much more than just trying to bag a bargain. It is the whole family day out experience that they are after."

With an increase of 15 per cent in the sales of Bluewater gift cards during the festive season, they are also predicting a further boost, with around £2m being redeemed in the upcoming January sales.

Other shopping centres also noticed a considerable rush, with a large number of customers taking advantage of the cut prices.

And with a number of bargains on offer, people were keen to save what money they could.

Suzie Brindle, marketing manager at The Mall, Maidstone, said: "I think today's shoppers are savvy shoppers, and they will shop for a bargain.

"I gauge people on how I shop, and if there are certain things I want I will wait and get them in the sale.

"Considering what's been going on

financially over the last few years, I think that's now becoming more apparent."

The shopping centre enjoyed a busy day, with its Next store also opening at 6am and the majority of shops offering sales.

The number of shoppers remained fairly consistent, and Ms Brindle said the day was similar to last year.

"It was pretty much the same," she explained.

"The only difference is that last year it was really busy in the morning, and this year it was steady all day.

"The majority of shops were showing a positive."

The McArthurGlen Ashford Designer Outlet was advertising huge sales reductions over the festive period.

Even before Christmas there was 70 per cent off French Connection and Jaeger items while stocks lasted.

Prices were also slashed in the outlet's Next store, with 75 per cent off selected items, and Links jewellery prices were reduced by half.

Other shopping centres, including Royal Victoria Place in Tunbridge Wells and intu Bromley, also saw a



BARGAIN HUNTING: Sales shoppers were out in force

large number of people turn out to enjoy the sales.

Marc Burchett, spokesperson for Royal Victoria Place, said that they had seen a huge number of shoppers during the festive period.

The number of customers they welcomed had actually increased since last year.

He explained: "Many shoppers still left it to the last minute to do their Christmas shopping.

"We saw more than 51,000 shoppers through our doors on Christmas Eve, which was up nearly 14 per cent on 2013.

"On Boxing Day we welcomed more than 30,000 shoppers to Royal Victoria Place and had queues of shoppers waiting for Next to open at 6am.

"Even though the majority of retailers did not open until 11am on Boxing Day, we found the centre extremely busy with shoppers who were eager to be the first to pick up the best of the bargains on offer."

Mr Burchett added: "The Fenwick sale started a day later, on December 27, and again proved to be a huge attraction for shoppers looking to find

top-name brand products at bargain prices.

"That day we saw more than 53,000 shoppers descend on Royal Victoria Place, which was again up on last year."

And he said stores were actively taking measures to encourage customers to come in rather than shop from behind a computer.

"This Christmas, retailers have been keen to offer consumers some great incentives to shop in-store rather than online," he added.

"I believe this has really paid off and helped to attract more shoppers to thriving town centres like Tunbridge Wells."

A spokesperson for intu Bromley said: "The traditional Boxing Day sales rush was very much in evidence in the centre, with many customers queuing and waiting for stores to open.

"Our cafes and restaurants were doing a brisk trade, with ardent sales shoppers enjoying breakfast before they braved the crowds searching for bargains.

"Shoppers given intu gift cards for Christmas were out in force to take advantage of the bargains."



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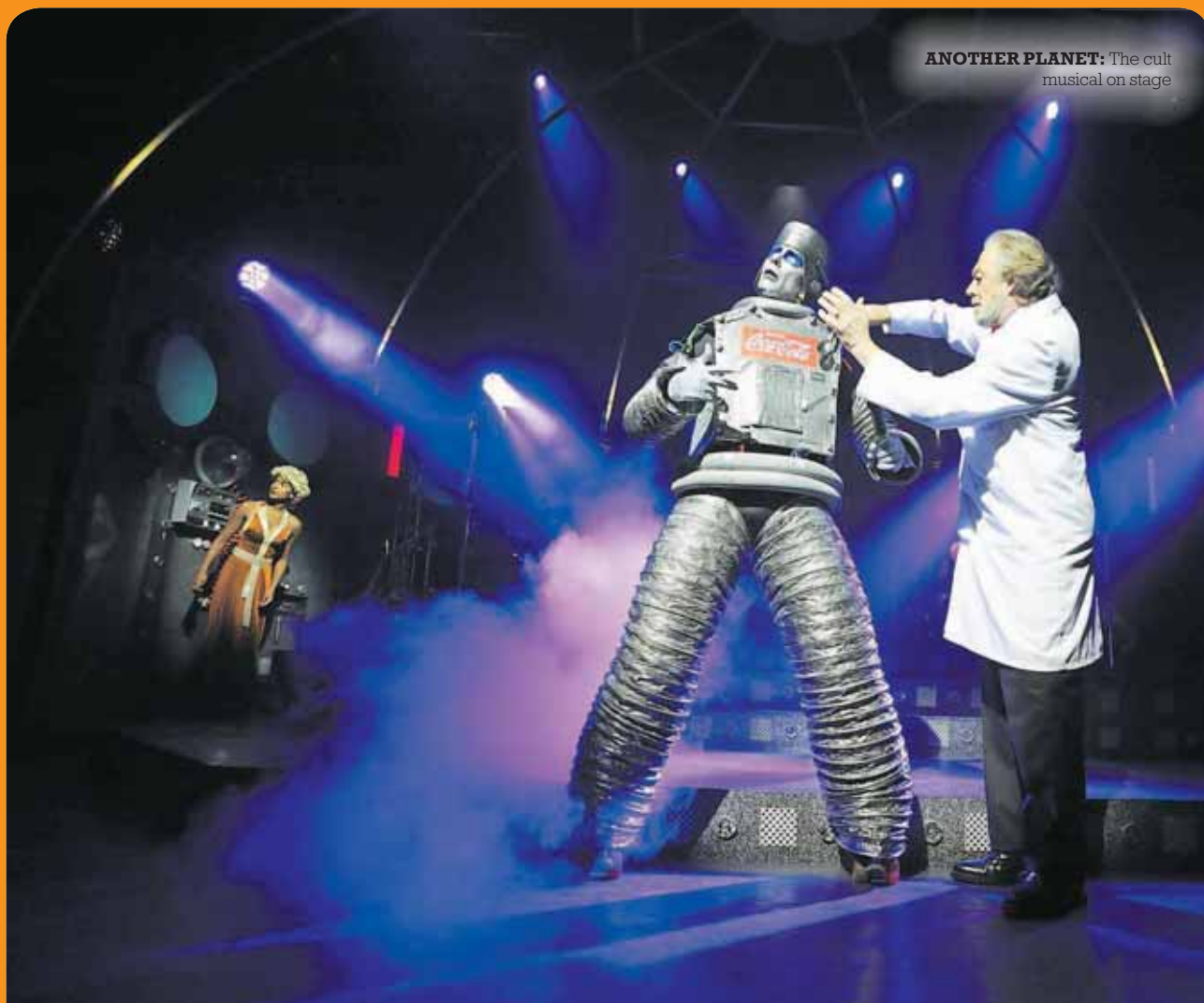
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ANOTHER PLANET: The cult musical on stage

Captain Tempest and crew return to Forbidden Planet

Olivier-winning musical on stage again as part of a 25th anniversary tour

THIS year is the 25th anniversary of award-winning musical *Return to the Forbidden Planet*.

And to celebrate the quarter-century since Captain Tempest and his crew first journeyed into hyperspace, and 14 years since the last UK tour, the Olivier Award-winning production is back - and will be at the Orchard Theatre in Dartford next month.

The musical is inspired by Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* and tells the story of the crew of a routine survey flight under the command of Captain Tempest.

After take-off, Captain Tempest converses with the ship's new science officer, who is a woman, and they argue about the importance of men and women on earth. During their argument, the ship gets caught in a meteor shower.

The science officer suggests that

they use the shuttle craft and abandon ship, but Captain Tempest insists on flying through the storm.

During the confusion, the science officer escapes the ship on the shuttle craft.

The spaceship is drawn mysteriously to the planet D'Illyria, where the crew meet mad scientist Doctor Prospero.

He has been marooned on the planet since his wife and science partner Gloria sent him and their daughter Miranda into space.

Doctor Prospero offers to help repair the broken starship and he, his daughter, and their robot Ariel come aboard.

The ship's cook, Cookie, is instantly taken by Miranda's beauty and falls in love with her - a love he thinks she returns.

In fact she has fallen in love with

Captain Tempest, against the will of her father.

The musical has an interesting history - it opened at the West End's Cambridge Theatre in September 1989, where it ran for more than 1,500 performances and won the 1990 Olivier Award for best musical.

Now some of the original crew members have come aboard once more, including the design team and writer Bob Carlton.

They are hoping to recreate the details that made the show popular the first time round, as they present the musical to a whole new audience.

Mr Carlton, who directed the original West End production, will once again be in the director's chair.

He said: "It was an incredible time when *Return to the Forbidden*

Planet landed in the West End, in what was a vintage year alongside shows such as *Miss Saigon* and *Buddy*.

"And it's thanks to the audiences, who took it to their hearts and rocked out every night, that it became such a cult success.

"I can't wait to bring it back 25 years later.

"This will introduce it to a whole new generation and reunite it with original fans of the show.

"I'm thrilled to be able to return to the *Forbidden Planet* and get reacquainted with Captain Tempest and his crew once more."

The cast is to be announced. The show will be at the Orchard Theatre between Monday, February 2 and Saturday, February 7.

For more information visit orchardtheatre.co.uk, or call the box office on 01322 220000.

Marcus brings X-factor to new tour of Joseph

By Maria Chiorando

maria.chiorando@archant.co.uk

X-FACTOR favourite Marcus Collins will join fellow contestant Lloyd Daniels in a new production of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat.

The production will be touring the UK, coming to Gravesend's Woodville Theatre in April.

Mr Collins, who will play the Narrator, was mentored by Take That singer Gary Barlow and was runner-up on The X-Factor in 2011, pipped to the post by winners Little Mix.

He's recently been on a world tour, performing in The West End Men, and played 14 sold-out shows.

He also had the honour of being invited by the British Consulate and Chinese Embassy to perform at a special gala at the end of the tour, following in the footsteps of other top Brit artists including Adele.

Following the 2014 UK tour, Lloyd Daniels reprises his role as Joseph for the 2015 tour.

He became the X Factor's youngest contestant in the 2009



series and reached the final five.

Since then he has performed to sold-out arenas on a 56-date X-Factor tour and released the single Suburban Girl.

The show also sees the return of Matt Lapinskas, who will reprise the role of the Pharaoh.

Best known for playing Anthony Moon in EastEnders, he was also runner-up in the eighth series of Dancing on Ice.

He joined the Joseph cast in 2014, making his musical theatre debut.

This retelling of the Biblical story about Joseph, his eleven brothers and the coat of many colours, by Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber, has a score which is full of popular songs – including Jacob and Sons, Close Every Door, Go Go Go Joseph and Any Dream Will Do.

The show is on at the Woodville Theatre between Tuesday, April 28 and Saturday, May 2.

For information and tickets visit www.woodville.co.uk or call 01474 337774.



DRAMATIC: Lloyd Daniels as Joseph



COLOURFUL: Technicolour costumes

Deadpan comedy at Leas

COMEDIAN Jimmy Carr will bring his Funny Business tour to the Leas Cliff Hall on February 3.

For information call 01303 228600 or visit www.leascliff-hall.org.uk.



Brothers reunited in play

TUNBRIDGE Wells will host a production of Blood Brothers at its Assembly Hall Theatre.

The show, which runs from January 26-31, tells the story of twins who meet again after being separated at birth.

For information and tickets call the box office on 01892 530613.

Screw-Bo plays Margate

X-FACTOR'S 2013 winner Sam Bailey will play a gig at Margate's Winter Gardens on January 26.

Tickets cost £27.50. To buy, visit www.allgigs.co.uk or call 01843 292795.



Marlowe gets US sound

THE Jersey Boys are crossing the pond to do a show at Canterbury's Marlowe Theatre.

The award-winning musical tells the story of four boys who sold 100 million records.

The show runs from January 20-31 and tickets cost from £18.50 to £49.50. Call the box office on 01227 787787.



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Seasonal produce inspires food star's new book

Natalia Conroy's foodie book *The Kitchen Orchard* inspired praise from Nigella. The author tells all...

NATALIA Conroy knows a good deal about having too many cooks in the kitchen.

The author of new cookery title *The Kitchen Orchard* is married to fellow chef Jonathan, who she met while working at London's famed River Cafe restaurant.

But there's no squabbling over saucepans and meddling with each other's menus. Theirs is a harmonious kitchen and the two often take it in turns to cook in the evenings, or team up for their private dining clients.

"It's a real partnership," says the 26-year-old.

"My husband's been cooking three times as long as I have, and in professional kitchens.

"So I take a lot of my form from him, and when we have a job, I tend to be a bit more anxious and he's more confident."

But Ms Conroy was dealt a hefty boost of confidence from the acclaim she's drawn from her first book.

She draws inspiration from seasonal produce and her well-stocked store cupboard, and it's clear that winter is a fertile time for her.

"I guess I really enjoy being able to cook things slowly and to leave them to take their time," she said.

"It's a very hearty time of year, and I think everybody agrees, you feel more hungry in the winter. You need

more energy to do things, and we're all glad for a nice bowl of something."

Understandably for two chefs, the kitchen is the hub of the house and a great place to hunker down during the cold months.

"It's the room we're in most of the time," Ms Conroy said.

"There are a lot of cookery books in piles on the floor."

Among that mountain of books is a treasured copy of Nigella Lawson's *Feast*.

"When I was younger, Nigella was a massive inspiration," Ms Conroy said.

"Her books made me feel like I could just make do and mend anything, and cooking was fun."

"When I was at Oxford, Nigella was doing a signing of her book *Feast*. I went to meet her and it was the most exciting day ever."

And in a lovely twist, Conroy's own book attracted words of praise from Lawson, among others.

"Nigella's first food books were my favourites, and so it was absolutely amazing that she enjoyed my book," Ms Conroy said.

"You can't really get higher praise and encouragement than from her."

"When I got the book deal, it was a real honour, and I thought, I'm not sure I know enough to write a book. I felt that was something Claudia Roden or Nigella did, so it's wonderful to



FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD: A cheeseboard truffle selection, and Ms Conroy's book (inset)

have praise from people who really know what they're talking about.

"Hopefully, I put out some recipes and ideas and thoughts that make people want to make something to eat. But I've still got a long way to go!"

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Explosion of colour in Barbados

TRAVEL REVIEW: Barbados

By Claire Spreadbury

THERE are many ways to blow a four-year-old's mind. But looking down at her pink flip-flops and suddenly noticing they've turned purple is a pretty big wow moment for my daughter on holiday. We're 150ft below sea level and experiencing 'colour change' on board our Atlantis Submarine.

As we take our seats, there's a feeling of claustrophobia and excitement when the captain yells 'Dive! Dive! Dive! Dive! Dive!' and we plunge into the depths of the ocean.

We swirl past a shipwreck and bob around coral, while yellow goatfish, blue tangs and trumpetfish swim busily past our porthole. Children over three feet tall are welcome on board and will delight at seeing what really is at the bottom of the deep sea.

The plush Royal Villas at the Royal Westmoreland resort make a great base on the Platinum Coast - so called because this is where all the rich people own property.

Wayne Rooney has a villa here, and many sportsmen and celebrities have homes in the area.

Despite it being a supposedly busy time for Barbados, the resort's 750 acres, gorgeous greenery and vast facilities mean you barely see a soul.

Nice touches include a fired-up barbecue on your arrival, complete with a cheery chef to cook it for you. So once you've tucked the tots into bed, you can put up your frazzled feet, crack open an award-winning bottle of Bajan-brewed Banks beer and be waited on hand and foot - they even wash up afterwards and leave you with the leftovers!

The stunning 7,045-yard championship golf course is worth a visit and lessons can be organised with Roger Beale, who represented Barbados in the 2006 World Cup of Golf.



CAPTIVATING: The many different colours of Barbados



Our little ones are too small for the family lesson, but my husband improved his (albeit awful) technique no end and apparently has "great potential".

And, of course, you can hop on the shuttle and head down to Mullins Beach and Spa. The sparkling turquoise sea is tepid enough, even for teeny toes, all year round.

Grab some beds, and whenever you need a strawberry daiquiri, just

wedge your yellow flag in the sand and it will appear in moments.

For older kids, the floating inflatable swing/slide/climbing wall looks immense fun and days can easily be spent building sandcastles and taking in vitamin D.

For a day with a difference, though, try a trip to the Barbados Wildlife Reserve. Turtles hide away in their shells or pant in the heat, while deer and agouti are everywhere - all with-

in touching distance.

The friendliest peacocks I've ever met share space with pelicans, chickens and other birds.

Much to the relief of my four-year-old, the only snakes we see are in cages, but it's only at the very end of our visit when we finally sniff out the monkeys. Big families of them play at our feet, scarping up on rooftops and into trees, grooming each other and generally behaving better than

TRAVEL FACTS:

Claire Spreadbury stayed at the Royal Westmoreland (www.royalwestmoreland.com) which offers seven nights in a three-bedroom Royal Villa on a self-catering basis from £674 per person.

Thomas Cook Airlines (www.flythomascook.com) offers flights from Manchester to Barbados from £404 return, including taxes, baggage and meals.

my little monkeys!

Grown-ups in need of time out can book a babysitter and pretend to be young and rich in Rihanna's homeland. We play Spot The Celebrity while indulging in dinner at the renowned (and hugely expensive) The Cliff. Businessmen fly their private jets in for a meal at this restaurant, overlooking the ocean. If you're lucky enough to book a table on the deck, you can listen to the waves crash against the side, while tarpon, stingray and a plethora of tiddlers swim right beneath you.

But if spending 125 US dollars on a couple of courses of food doesn't float your boat, you can always opt for a Tiami Catamaran cruise. The rum punch flows as you take in the sights of Barbados, have fun with the crew and snorkel for turtles.

Barbados is full of colour. There are vibrant flowers, wonderful wooden shack houses, and shops proudly presenting their pristinely painted fronts, looking like glorified beach huts.

It might just be the ultimate family holiday. And it's certainly a great place to blow the mind of a curious four-year-old.

Film Reviews by Damon Smith



Birdman
(15, 119 mins) Comedy/Drama/Romance

IN BIRDMAN, Michael Keaton inhabits the role of middle-aged Hollywood star Riggan Thomson, whose glory days as a big screen superhero are long behind him.

Art and real life playfully blur in Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu's technically dazzling comedy.

Accompanied by a rambling voiceover from Riggan that reflects the character's mental unravelling, Birdman is a wickedly funny satire of a world of overinflated egos and barely concealed vices.

Peppered with affectionate verbal barbs aimed at Hollywood's current glitterati, Inarritu's picture is crammed to bursting with self-referential treats that demand a second and third viewing.

Rating 9/10

The Woman in Black: Angel of Death
(15, 98 mins) Horror/Thriller/Romance/Action

GHOST stories are well suited to the visual medium of film, because

the things that terrify us aren't those that we can see in the cold light of day, but the unspoken horrors that lurk just out of shot or in the inky blackness of a dimly lit back-ground.

Stern headmistress Jean Hogg and sensitive teacher Eve Parkins evacuate a group of London schoolchildren to the countryside, including a shell-shocked boy called Edward, whose parents perished in the latest barrage of German bombs.

The Woman In Black: Angel Of Death is bereft of original ideas and resorts to a familiar array of ominous creaks and groans to herald the arrival of the eponymous spirit.

Rating 5/10

The Theory of Everything
(12A, 123 mins) Drama/Romance



BASED on the memoir Travelling To Infinity by Jane Wilde Hawking, James Marsh's deeply moving drama charts the romance of physicist Stephen Hawking and his first wife Jane.

The film is anchored by two excellent performances. Eddie Redmayne is simply astounding as Stephen, affecting a mesmerizing physical transformation that surely

warrants an Oscar. Felicity Jones is equally compelling as his soul-mate, who sacrifices everything in the name of love and defies everyone.

With its delicate balance of tear-stained drama, deeply felt romance and comedy, it hits upon a winning formula.

Rating 9/10

PATRICIA Cornwell is no stranger to guns. She's big on personal security and never wants to leave herself vulnerable.

"I wouldn't call myself a gun expert but I am very familiar with firearms," the bestselling forensic thriller writer explains.

"I've owned a number of them throughout my life, particularly when I lived in places where I needed that form of protection, but more importantly, it's part of my research."

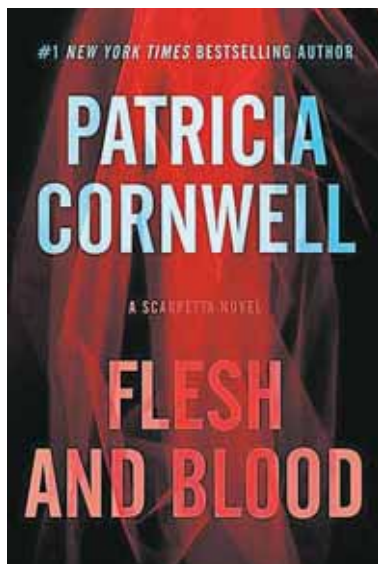
She tells me about her visit to a firing range in Texas to try out some of the newest, most high-tech weaponry, so she could write accurately about the gun in her 22nd Scarpetta novel, *Flesh And Blood*, which sees her heroine Dr Kay Scarpetta, on the hunt for a serial sniper who leaves no evidence except fragments of copper.

Her novels could give us a lot to worry about, yet Cornwell doesn't believe that the criminal possibilities that are explored in her books will give ideas to real criminals.

"I don't think potential criminals, who are driven by their own intense motivations, whether they are psychopathic or power-hungry, need me to give them ideas.

"They are going to come up with what works for them."

Her own life has seen almost as much drama as her books, and accounts of her miserable childhood, struggles with anorexia and alcohol and her outing as a lesbian, as well as legal battles and public fights with ex-lovers, have been well documented.



THE DARK SIDE OF LIFE: Patricia Cornwell's books deal with crime and murder



Writer Cornwell's serial success

Born in Miami, Cornwell's father, a lawyer, walked out on Christmas Day, ignoring his five-year-old daughter's attempts to cling to his leg.

Her mother moved to an evangelical community in North Carolina, down the road from famous preacher Billy Graham and his wife.

For years, Cornwell had no idea that she could be gay.

While studying English at college in North Carolina, she fell in love with her male professor, Charlie Cornwell.

They married but ended up divorcing after 10 years.

She did have lesbian encounters subsequently, but kept her sexuality a secret—until she was outed by several so-called friends who informed the

media. Cornwell has been happily married to Staci Gruber, a Harvard academic, for nearly 10 years.

She dedicates the latest book to her.

She said: "Scarpetta reflects my history a lot, which is inevitable when you spend so much time with a character. I think her point of view is the right one.

"I'm more mellow. You get some wisdom with time. Looking back to my 40s, when my career hit the high zone of success, I think I'm very different now to how I was then.

"You get a little less adamant. With time, you see different perspective, and see that there are not just two sides to a story. I don't rush to battle as much as I did."

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Cllr Hart's letter left me puzzled

COUNCILLOR Clive Hart's self-congratulatory letter (December 28) outlining the good deeds that he has carried out for our now-closed airport may have puzzled many Thanet residents.

In particular, those of us who were present at an airport supporters meeting last April in Margate Winter Gardens may have a rather different recollection of events.

After he had addressed the meeting and re-iterated his vigorous opposition to a small number of possible "night" flights Councillor Hart hurriedly left the meeting to a resounding chorus of boos from the audience of several hundred.

Peter Medwell,
Broadstairs

Much healthier and happier

IT'S devastating to learn that 43 million animals a year die from neglect, weather, disease etc before slaughter.

I can't imagine the suffering these gentle beings have.

We gave up meat and dairy products some years ago and we are healthy and happy, we've lost weight and our cholesterol levels have fallen.

We live very cheaply and we love knowing that no animal has suffered for us.

I fully recommend it.

The Vegan Society website has loads of information and are encouraging a cruelty free January. Why not try it?

Kathy Ferguson,
Whitstable

Abolish the 'health market'

I HAVE just had a cataract operation at Maidstone Hospital.

This was on Christmas Eve (when most workers were enjoying Christmas parties) and was organised and performed very professionally.

The whole service was excellent, efficient and prompt.

The staff (all fully NHS trained) couldn't have been more courteous and helpful and the operation was performed by an experienced consultant.

This was the "pure" NHS at its best, as envisaged by Nye Bevan. This is what all patients want and pay a fortune for in other countries.

However this is despite Government policy, not because of it.

Many other NHS services are "outsourced", cherry-picked by private companies for profit, or commissioned by someone with financial connections, and staffed

LETTER OF THE WEEK



Stand tall to protect county's 99 libraries

I AGREE with your view (Why we must stand tall and be strong in face of all challenges, 28 December) that the electorate in 2015 must not blame "the poor or the foreign" for challenges facing the UK. Your progressive focus on schools, the health service and support for those in most need is welcome.

In contrast, the Leader of Kent County Council, Paul Carter, offered no such clarity about his priorities for the future.

His one specific hope for 2015 seemed to be the opening of a grammar school annexe in Sevenoaks - falsely claiming that selection of pupils by the county equals "choice".

Rather than this focus on such a divisive development in one area of the county, I would have hoped for a vision from Mr Carter that encompassed the whole of Kent and benefitted all its 1.8 million residents.

Specifically, I would have liked the Leader's new year resolution

to be to keep open all of Kent's 99 libraries within a democratically accountable library service and aim to implement the recommendations of the recent Government-commissioned Sieghart Report.

As well as highlighting the importance and benefits of local libraries this report suggested investment to ensure that all libraries have full internet access, where possible toilets, and even coffee facilities.

Now, that would be in the interest of all communities across the county and would demonstrate a commitment to learning and enjoyment and a belief in Kent's future prosperity. Unfortunately, it seems our politicians lack the commitment to preserving and developing the treasures we have.

As you say, we are all going to need to "stand tall" in support of things that really matter.

Richard Stainton
Whitstable

by less qualified doctors and nurses, who's clinical decisions could be influenced by money some of which finds its way to shareholders.

The complication rate can be a lot higher as achieved by a private company performing cataracts in Devon, which had to be sacked, leaving the NHS to clear up the mess.

Despite all this the Government's NHS privatisation policy is still denied.

My experience is the norm despite the media obsession with "NHS disasters". It shows that not only is the "market" in healthcare unnecessary, it should be abolished as a failed inefficient corrupt ideological experiment promoted without a mandate by the three main political parties.

This would save at least £5

billion a year and some estimate as much as £10 billion easily filling the funding gap, allowing every citizen to benefit from a World-beating NHS.

Politicians still obsessed with trying to sell healthcare like supermarket goods know the price of everything but the value of nothing.

Dr Paul J Hobday,
Prospective Parliamentary
Candidate for Maidstone
and the Weald
National Health Action Party

Get rid of Lords and Commons

USING Rosie Spriggs criteria [KoS

28/12] we could get rid of most of the Commons and a good part of the Lords!

Being spoilt for choice, where do I start? The expenses scandal where many MPs claimed £100,000 plus, one famously claiming their sisters front room as a 'second home' and the bill for 'moat cleaning, etc., etc., which we've never heard of being paid back? John Prescott punching a voter, then being made a Lord after having sex on the job? Gordon Brown calling Gillian Duffy a 'bigot'? Plebgate? The paedophile scandal? All the incidents where Lib/Lab/Con MPs/councillors have been caught uttering/tweeting/e-mailling racist, homophobic and other non PC comments, which don't get the prominence afforded to Ukip, because they're all frightened of Ukip? Etc, etc!

Who of all the Lib/Lab/Con MPs can take the moral high ground, or with a debt of £22,000 for each man woman and child, the economic high ground, or with the NHS in disarray, immigration the size of a small city every year, the EU demanding another £34 billion and all the other problems none of them have the wit, or the balls, to do anything about, any sort of high ground?

Phil Granger,
West Malling,

Watch the road for tolls ahead

MPs are currently reviewing the Infrastructure Bill, which includes controversial measures such as on fracking.

It will also turn the Highways Agency, which manages England's motorways and major routes, into a company - initially government-owned ('GoCo'), as a big step towards full privatisation.

This will inevitably mean road tolling, which will push traffic onto non-tolled local roads, leading to worse congestion, road wear and more accidents.

The all-party Transport Select Committee was not convinced of any need for the change, and opinion polls have repeatedly found strong public opposition to tolls.

Our roads have been paid for several times over by the travelling public and business.

They should not be sold-off or used to extract even more money from us. Tolls would also increase delivery costs and the price of goods in shops.

Enough is enough - it's time for the public's voice to be heard and I ask readers to urge their MP to oppose the Infrastructure Bill - For more information, please visit www.fairdealforthemotorist.org.uk/handsoff.htm.

Mark Dollar,
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Canterbury Cathedral, by Alan Blackburn, Canterbury

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Let the Great Danes reveal the new you

Thinking New Year, new you? Well, for 2015, why not look into seeing what we can offer you?

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Get a little help from the NHS to lose weight or to quit smoking

DID you know that the NHS in Kent provides services that can help you to find a healthy weight, quit smoking or get more active? If your New Year's resolution is to make a fresh start on your diet, finally give up the demon weed or to make the most of our beautiful Kent countryside by getting out and about more, then the NHS can help.

Anne Ford, head of Health Improvement Services for Kent Community Health NHS Trust, said: "We provide a range of services for people who want to improve their health and wellbeing, ranging from Health Walks to Change for Life Clubs for all the family.

"We also provide free NHS health checks for anyone aged 40-74 and our Expert Patients Programme is there to support anyone with a long-term health condition.

"If you want to quit smoking, you're up to ten times more likely to succeed with help from our Stop Smoking Team. We can provide NRT products on prescription as well as all the help you need to finally go smoke-free.

"For anyone who wants a bit of extra help to make lifestyle changes, our health trainers offer up to six free sessions of support and advice."

Find out more by visiting www.kenthealthandwellbeing.nhs.uk or call the team on 0300 123 1220 to find out more.



JOIN NOW AND GET YOUR FIRST MONTH FREE!

Kickstart the New Year with Feel Good Health Club. From energising exercise classes to the bubbling spa pool, we have everything you need to make 2015 your healthiest year yet.



NEW YEAR, NEW YOU

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Kent Community Health 
NHS Trust

Live well, Live Longer!



Did you know that the NHS in Kent can help you to live a healthier, longer life?

We have local services that can help you to stay fit, healthy and well. So if you want to lose weight, get active or stop smoking in 2015, get in touch.

0300 123 1220

Stop Smoking • Healthy Weight • Health Checks
 Health Trainers • Health Walks • Expert Patients
 Exercise Referral • Family Lifestyle Clubs

www.kenthealthandwellbeing.nhs.uk

Unique cruises on the river Medway

THE Kentish Lady offers a unique experience of the River Medway, from one-hour trips at weekends and school holidays to three-hour cruises during the week - and is also the perfect setting for your private party.

The one-hour trips are perfect for the family and the adult-only three-hour cruises (which must be booked in advance) through Farleigh Lock include a picnic box or fish and chips. There is even a licensed bar on board if you fancy a tipple along the way.

Kentish Lady River Medway Boat Trips offer you a fantastic opportunity to shop in Maidstone town centre by boat! You can Park & Sail, and use the river to visit Kent Life, The Malta Inn and Whatman Park - Maidstone's millennium park.

If you have a little time to wait for the next cruise, you can visit the refreshment kiosk where you will find hot and cold drinks, cupcakes and cookies, sweets and ice cream - a well-deserved treat!

As the river weaves its way through Maidstone there is history around every corner. Take in the sights and splendour of this great county town from the comfort of your own seat aboard the Kentish Lady river boat.

The River Medway provides a beautiful backdrop and the Kentish Lady can cater for every occasion, from disco parties, wedding receptions, birthdays and anniversaries to social gatherings.

We provide a wide variety of buffet choices and can arrange entertainment and decorate the boat for your special occasion. There is even a licensed bar on board.

Gift vouchers: Why not treat someone special to an unusual and thoughtful gift? Three-hour cruise vouchers are available for purchase any time throughout the year. To purchase your voucher please call 01622 753740.

Of course, our licensed bar will be open if your fancy something a little stronger, that is until the bar staff have to do the locks!

Our well-stocked bar serves a wide variety of drinks, including wine, spirits, alcopops, draught and bottled beer, soft drinks, hot beverages and snacks. Our bar tariffs are similar to pub prices.

One-hour trips run from March to December; and three-hour trips run from April to October. Private hire is from April to September. See our website for full details: www.kentishlady.co.uk.

Pride in offering loyal customers the marque's best

WITH a history stretching back nearly a century, Citroën has a loyal customer base that holds the performance, style and value of each Citroën model in high esteem. Wilmoths Citroën is proud to represent the internationally-acclaimed brand, providing motorists throughout Kent and Sussex with the full array of new cars, used vehicles and aftersales services.

New and used Citroën cars

With dealerships in Ashford, Battle, Eastbourne, Folkestone, Maidstone and Uckfield, we take great pride in being the largest Citroën dealer in the Kent and Sussex region. At each of our locations, we offer the complete range of new cars from Citroën, incorporating everything from chic city models to versatile family vehicles.

Such is the diversity of its new car range, Citroën's dedication to ensuring there is a model to suit you is almost unprecedented in the automotive market.

If you're looking for an affordable and stylish new model, the Citroën C1 will prove ideal; the new Citroën Picasso offers style and grace; while the Citroën Berlingo Multispace has enough room to accommodate families of all sizes.

The sales teams at each Wilmoths dealership look forward to helping find the perfect new Citroën car for you.

They will even offer impartial advice on funding your purchase, as well as directing you to the myriad used cars we have available should there be a suitable model at a fantastic price.

Take a look at the full range of new and used Citroën cars we currently have available and book a test drive today.



Take a peaceful cruise along the River Medway

As the river weaves its way through Maidstone there is history around every corner. Take in the sights and splendour of this great county town from the comfort of the Kentish Lady River Boat.

The River Medway provides a beautiful backdrop and the Kentish Lady can cater for every occasion, from disco parties, wedding receptions, birthday's and anniversaries to social gatherings.

We provide a wide variety of buffet choices and can arrange entertainment and decorate the boat for your special occasion. There is even a licensed bar on board if you fancy a tipple along the way.



- Available for events and occasions • Fully Licensed Bar open during all trips
- DJ available (booking required) • Buffet available (booking required)
- Walk-on 1hr cruises available at weekends at during school holidays

Kentish Lady
Hire Cruisers Ltd

01622 753740
www.kentishlady.co.uk
Hire Cruisers Ltd, Undercliffe Boathouse, Bishops Way,
Maidstone, Kent ME15 6GX



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WILMOTHs, 10 - 48 LONDON ROAD, DARTFORD, KENT, DA1 4BH

FOLKESTONE 01303 245588
WILMOTHs, FOORD ROAD, FOLKESTONE, KENT, CT19 5AE

MAIDSTONE 01622 750442
WILMOTHs, SUTTON ROAD, MAIDSTONE, KENT, ME15 8RD

WWW.WILMOTHs.CO.UK

NEW 2015: Interiors

Mid Kent Flooring brings a personal touch to industry

FAMILY-run business Mid Kent Flooring opened its doors in April 2014, with a vast amount of experience between Kay and the team. The business wanted to bring a personal touch to the flooring industry and hasn't looked back.

Their team will support you through every stage of your purchase, from budgeting and specifications to technical and colour choices to suit your individual needs. And the service won't stop there; they are on hand for any questions you may have throughout the whole process.

Kay and the team are backed by their desire for complete customer satisfaction and will deliver this through their experience and expertise. They will advise you on the perfect flooring for your home or business, and it will be fitted to the highest standard.

Remember floor-covering is an investment

and we offer a selection of carpets, vinyl, woods, and laminates just to name a few. And at budgets to suit!

So if you're looking at doing up one or more rooms of your home or business Mid Kent Flooring are here to help!

Mid Kent Flooring supply the latest trends in flooring along with traditional patterns, but also offer bespoke colour and sizes tailored to your personal choice and needs.

The showroom is kitted out with all the floorings you could think of, and you should head down to meet the team for a friendly welcome and consultation.

January Deals:

■ On all new orders placed throughout January you will be entitled to free grippers and standard trims.

■ Free uplift and disposal of existing carpets and vinyls.

CSC has all your floor needs covered

WELCOME to Carpet Sale Centre for all your flooring needs. Here at CSC we supply and install all types of flooring from all the leading manufacturers at the very best prices available, whether selecting from sample books or through our own stock of over 200 rolls.

We have been in Strood for 20 years working with retail and various commercial companies, which include estate agents and builders throughout Kent and the south east.

We provide a professional fitting service, contract and domestic, felt backs to Karndean, floor-prep screed, or ply right through to the finish.

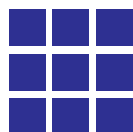
Pictured is a luxury vinyl tile with a border cut freehand by fitter Kevin Weeks. Luxury vinyl tiles are becoming very popular, especially those from Karndean, Polyflor and TLC. We have an area just for these tiles in our warehouse for you to view and to help you decide where they will go.

CSC hold in stock more than 200 rolls of carpet in various qualities, from landlord to let specials to luxury 80 per cent wool twist pile and Wilton. Our fitters provide a complete professional service, from floor prep to the finish.



We provide a fitting and delivery service throughout Kent and the south east. For a no-obligation quote please feel free to contact us on 01634 720411.

If you cannot get to us, we can come to you. Let us know what you are looking for and you can select in the comfort of your own home or even at work.



Mid Kent Flooring

COMMERCIAL & DOMESTIC FLOOR COVERINGS

- Carpets
- Vinyls
- Laminate
- Solid Wood
- Artificial Grass
- Karndean
- Wet Rooms
- Uplift old
- Move furniture

All work is fully guaranteed
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Unit 2, Mid Kent Shopping Centre, Castle Road,
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01622 761230

www.midkentflooring.co.uk



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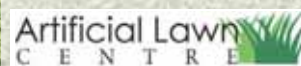
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TEL: 01634 720411

Artificial Grass All Year Round

Here at Artificial Grass Centre we sell a wide range of various different types of artificial grass and turf.

Call 01634 720411 and a member of our staff will be happy to assist you in choosing the correct type of grass.

We offer an installation and delivery service throughout South East England, please contact us for more details.



Unit 8 Ballard Business Park,
Cuxton Road, Strood, Kent ME2 2NY
www.artificiallawncentre.co.uk



DJ Interiors - the secret is out!

ESTABLISHED in the year 2000, DJ Interiors has grown from a one-man fitting service to the complete, bespoke flooring company.

Catering for industries such as estate agents, care homes, building developments and pharmaceutical firms, the company has also worked on specialist projects for multi-million-pound yachts in Cannes and Monaco and is frequently requested back to work at the Cannes Film Festival.

Currently its work is being showcased on Grand Designs, reflecting the quality craftsmanship it offers to all its customers, whether domestic or commercial.

Whatever it is, DJ Interiors has you covered: from full refurbishments to hygienic wall cladding, from safety flooring to Axminsters, from landlord cord to luxury vinyl tiles, there really is something to suit everyone at an affordable price.

Its prices are all-inclusive too, so there are no nasty hidden charges at the end.

Over the past 14 years, all of DJ Interiors' work has been generated as a direct result of a referral. Its work has always done the selling and as such the company has operated as a



'best kept secret' passed on by happy customers. The firm's staff pride themselves on their levels of service and only sign off a job if they would be happy with it in their own homes.

So now the secret is out. Call the company at its showroom. The staff would love to talk to you about any grand designs you have and give you advice on how best to achieve your plans at a suitable budget. They look forward to hearing from you soon.

Call 01843 224362, or see the website at www.dannyjefferyinteriors.co.uk.



for all your *flooring* & *blinds*

01843 224 362

E: danny@dannyjefferyinteriors.co.uk

A8 Continental Approach
Westwood Industrial Estate
Margate, Kent CT9 4JG

www.dannyjefferyinteriors.co.uk

dannyjefferyinteriors

We specialise in supplying and fitting flooring and blinds around your home or your workplace. Our reputation has been built on providing the highest quality products with our experienced craftsmen at a price you can afford.

Call us today. We'd love to talk to you about your project.

Glebe Fencing Ltd protecting your home's boundary and your security

WINTER weather can be cruel and while you're in the warmth of your lounge your fencing is out in the harsh elements protecting your boundary and your security. How many fences will still be standing after the predicted winds? Who knows. But if you find that yours didn't stand up to the climate you'll want to arrange a replacement, durable enough to last and cost effective enough not to break the New Year bank balance.

Glebe Fencing Ltd has grown from the traditions of a sole trader to a company that now services the whole of Kent and beyond. Maintaining the values that were the foundations of the growth, you'll be sure to receive great advice from experienced fencers who have the added benefit of stocking their own panels and materials, ensuring you get comprehensive service with just the one call.

There are added opportunities to buy materials and panels at the Glebe Fencing online store, pay using secure banking or PayPal and take advantage of free local delivery* (terms and conditions online).

Rest assured, all installers are employed by Glebe to maintain our level of high standards on every installation. And with a free site survey and fixed price quotations there will be no unwanted surprises. All quotations are valid for three months from the date of the survey, giving you time to consider or compare the quote without the worry of time constraints.

For more information, free advice or to see our genuine pictures of completed works, visit www.glebefencing.co.uk or call 01622 220054..

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Opening Times:
Monday - Friday 7am - 4.30pm
and Saturday 7am - 3pm

Kent's Fencing Specialists

Glebe Fencing Ltd provide the most comprehensive fencing service, offering advice and solutions to your fencing needs, including a repair and maintenance service.

One of Kent's leading suppliers of fencing, decking and gates to the trade and public.



Why shop with Glebe?

- CONVENIENT • VALUE FOR MONEY • FREE LOCAL DELIVERY*
- SAME DAY COLLECTION ON ALL STOCK ITEMS
- QUALITY PRODUCTS • GREAT SERVICE



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OR VISIT GLEBE AT 108 HOCKERS LANE, DETLING ME14 3JJ

Transforming lives ... all year and every year!

CHRYSALIS Care – transforming lives this New Year ... all year and every year.

Chrysalis Care has celebrated many New Years since it started providing foster placements for children and young people in 1997.

It's the time of year for reviewing and evaluating goals and plans, often with hopes for a better life - and Chrysalis Care have always strived for better lives for the children and young people they provide foster care for.

Being placed with the right family, at a time when they need it most, can make all the difference to the life experience of a child or young person and can actually help to transform their lives.

As an Ofsted-rated 'outstanding' organisation, we know that without our diverse foster

carer team, we could not fulfil our ethos of transforming the lives of children.

Whatever time of year, children come into the care system for all sorts of reasons with needs that are individual to their experiences, so we need foster carers from a range of cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds, mixed age groups and both single people and couples.

If you want to know more about becoming a fully-trained foster carer, receiving 24-hour support, and have a spare room and also room in your life to offer a child or young person, we are waiting to hear from you and to answer your queries.

If this New Year you want to make a difference, please call 0208 2982800, email info@chrysaliscare.org or visit chrysaliscare-fostering.org.

Dedicated therapeutic family-based care for children and young in England by ISP

ISP is an independent fostering agency established in 1987 which practises dedicated therapeutic family-based care for children and young people in England.

We arrange fostering for children in ISP-approved foster families. The all-important relationship between foster families and young people is underpinned by a therapeutic, multi-disciplinary approach with expertise in social work, therapy, education and fostering. In our therapeutic fostering, carers have appropriate experience, knowledge, understanding and empathy and use everyday caring experiences to help children thrive and develop. With extensive support, our carers work with young people who at times display extreme behaviours and emotions, helping them to live in stable, nurturing family placements.

Our foster carers come from various ethnic, social, racial and cultural backgrounds. Some are married, some are single and some are in long-term relationships.

Many foster carers have children of their own although this is not a requirement, however, carers must be able to demonstrate a good understanding of how the needs of children who are fostered may differ from those who live with their own families.

Life as an ISP foster carer is rarely predictable. Each young person arrives with their own distinctive personality, challenges and needs. Extensive support is provided, however carers do need deep reserves of determination, flexibility and resilience.

We are particularly interested in respite-only carers.

We have centres in Kent, London, Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and Sussex. We have also started recruiting in the Solent area.

If you would like to find out more please contact our Fostering Team on 0800 0857 989 or fostering.team@ispchildcare.org.uk or visit our website www.ispchildcare.org.uk.

COULD YOU FOSTER?

chrysaliscare
transforming lives



Chrysalis Care, an OUTSTANDING fostering provider, is seeking those interested in becoming a foster carer, and joining our outstanding agency in providing first class care for children and young people.

You don't have to be married, you don't need to be employed, you don't need a big house, just a spare room and space in your life to help a vulnerable child to achieve.

As a Chrysalis Care foster carer you will receive:

- 24 hour professional support
- Excellent remuneration
- Comprehensive training
- Access to a range of children's services



We are also looking for those interested in providing a home to a **parent and child, teenagers, children with disabilities** and carers interested in **remand fostering**.



For more information and application:
Tel: 020 8298 2800 Email: info@chrysaliscare.org
Web: www.chrysaliscarefostering.org



COULD YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE?



Are you ready for the challenge of putting some **colour** back into a young person's life?

We need Foster Carers now so call us on **0800 0857 989** or text **ISP** to **80800** (freetext) to talk about Fostering.

We give generous allowances & excellent support.



Fostering

Therapy

Education

Social Work

InSPired Foster Care
www.ispchildcare.org.uk

Make 2015 your year to shine – enrol on a course at Bromley College now

If you want to make a difference to your life in 2015 then why not look at the many opportunities available to you at Bromley College this January?

With more than 20 new courses to choose from, now is the perfect time to develop your skills and improve your career prospects in 2015. We are launching some new courses aimed directly at 16 to 18-year-olds who are still deciding on their next course of study, or who have decided to change direction from the course they are on.

These are full-time courses and open to any young person who is still required to be in education, employment or training.

We have an exciting range of access courses for adults who want to gain the qualifications to go to university.

These courses are eligible for funding for over-24s through 24+ Advanced Learning Loans, which means there are no upfront fees and you only pay back when you are earning over £21,000 per year.

If you complete a relevant degree you won't have to pay the Access loan back at all.

You can also study up to degree level at Bromley College, where hundreds of students

are already studying in our dedicated Higher Education and Professional Centre where the high standards of teaching and small class sizes make learning close to home an enviable experience.

Our new Hospitality, Food and Enterprise College is offering an entry-level programme for those wanting a career in catering. We are also running a series of short courses, for those who want to develop their home cooking skills.

Principal Sam Parrett says: "It's been an exciting year here at Bromley College of Further and Higher Education. From the launch of our 14-16 college this September, to the opening of our brand new £4.5m sports centre, we have had a huge amount to celebrate.

"As well as our high success and retention rates, students will also benefit from our recently launched Bromley Advantage programme. This is aimed at helping our students to develop employability and communication skills – which are crucial to a successful future career.

"We have courses for people of all ages and all abilities. Simply take a look at what we have to offer and enrol today at www.bromley.ac.uk."

Celebrating pupils' A-level results at Norton Knatchbull

STUDENTS, parents and staff at the Norton Knatchbull School gathered to celebrate their A-level results. In total, our students achieved 22% A* or A grades, and 50% A*, A or B grades.

Our overall pass rate was 99.7%. The vast majority of our students will continue their studies at university and have already received firm offers of a place. The average point score per student was 847.94.

There are a number of students whose achievements are exceptional across all A2 subjects they studied, and who therefore deserve particular praise: Callum Shaw achieved A* grades in all of Further Mathematics, Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics and English Literature; Christy Varghese achieved A* grades in Mathematics and Psychology and two A grades in Biology and Chemistry; Ryan Cherry also achieved A* grades in Sociology and Psychology, an A grade in Physical Education and a C grade in Biology; Justin Bean achieved an A* grade in Geography and A grades in Fine Art, Mathematics and Physics; Edward Potter



achieved an A* grade in Psychology and A grades in Sociology, Music and Chemistry; Shanice Evans achieved an A* grade in Sociology, B grades in English Language and Literature, Government and Politics and Psychology, and a B grade in the AQA Extended Project.

In addition to the above, the following students must be congratulated for gaining an A* grade in one of the A2 subjects they studied: Harry Middleton (Government and Politics); Christopher Morley (English Literature); Maisie Newman (Sociology); Michael Parrett (Mathematics); Oliver Potter (Chemistry); Aidan Shell (Psychology); George Tickner (Russian).

new new year you!

Make 2015 your year to shine!

Start a new course this January at Bromley College

With funding and loans for many courses – now is the time to invest in your future.

Visit bromley.ac.uk

BromleyCOLLEGE

OF FURTHER & HIGHER EDUCATION

Sixth Form Open Evening

on 19th January 2015 6pm to 8pm

The Norton Knatchbull School is a popular and highly regarded selective school for boys aged 11-18 which admits a growing number of girls into its Sixth Form. Having proudly served the local community of Ashford in Kent since the 17th century, we combine traditional values with a forward-looking and vibrant learning environment where young people are nurtured to become considerate, confident and well-rounded individuals.

"There are so many excellent extra-curricular activities... I've lost count... all of which are superb."
W7 student

We provide an atmosphere in which all our students feel supported and inspired to strive for their personal best. Our approach to academic study is varied, disciplined and fosters a life-long love of learning. We value community and celebrate diversity. As a result, our young people are able to make informed and positive life choices, and are equipped to face the challenges of a fast-changing, competitive and increasingly global environment.

We are proud of our track record of strong examination results, the wealth of our extra-curricular provision and the strength of our careers education, advice and guidance. We benefit from a wide range of facilities which support learning in a variety of disciplines, styles and environments. Our specialisms model innovation and best practice across the school and maintain productive links with local schools and the wider national and international community.

Our students are supported by a team of highly qualified, hard-working and caring teaching and support staff and a well informed and supportive Governing Body, all of whom are united in their desire to achieve the best possible outcomes for all.

"There is no problem too small – you will always be listened to."
T5-13 student

Mr S K Crank
Headteacher
The Norton Knatchbull School
Hythe Road, Ashford
Kent TN23 1QJ
T: 01233 838888
F: 01233 838888
Information@nks.kent.sch.uk
www.nks.kent.sch.uk

Contact Heather Vernon for more information - HVernon@nks.kent.sch.uk

Stade Court is ready for you

YOU might need a place to stay on business or the right place for your next conference. So it's a good job we've so many places to choose from.

More than 270 hotels in fact, with 1,100 meeting rooms between them. That's a lot of very different places jam-packed with personality!

And from 12th century elegance to 21st century city chic, some things never change. Like getting great value and free internet access.

Whether it's making your business stays pay with Best Western Rewards®, getting more bang for your buck with our Going Green programme, or just recharging the batteries with our luxurious leisure facilities, we take care of business at Best Western.

Our free credit account for businesses makes your hotels and rail travel easier to book and your fuel and car parking easier to pay for, making your expense management far easier to deal with.

We really do bring more to the table with our choice of interesting venues across the UK, great value inclusive rates and dedicated advisers. Find out how they can help you with



your next meeting. We're perfectly placed to help you plan your next conference or event, with everything you need from technology to award-winning cuisine. Get in touch and your enquiry will be answered within two hours.

Sound good? Find out how we can help with the big day.

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Basepoint Folkestone's Business Centre is the place to look for easy-in and easy-out office space

AN economic upturn is being felt at Basepoint Folkestone. Basepoint Folkestone, which offers business accommodation in offices and workshops, is going from strength to strength. It has now been open for nearly 13 years and has given a home to more than 300 businesses over the years.

Supplying their business units on an easy-in, easy-out basis, Basepoint has been able to give businesses the option to stay for as long as they like from just one month up to over 12 years, as several businesses have opted for.

This has allowed the businesses currently at the Business Centre to grow, which has been happening frequently over the last few months, along with brand new companies taking up the offer.

Other services provided at Basepoint are meeting rooms for up to 32 people, an on-site café, photocopying, faxing, telephones and fast internet.

Everything a business should need without the hassle of dealing with it. Leave that to the management staff!

The centre also provides free networking events for both tenants and external companies to promote business and collaboration.

The Networking Hub Group meet every other month, providing informal networking, lunch and a short presentation on a business topic – all free.

The centre is nearly full, with only two offices currently available, so if you would like to be located at the busy, professional, friendly Business Centre, please call Lorraine or Caroline on 01303 298298, drop by Monday to Friday to view, or find out more at www.basepoint.co.uk.

Welcome to BEST WESTERN STADE COURT HOTEL

At The BEST WESTERN Stade Court Hotel, Hythe, Kent, We have a full range of Conference facilities and equipment and can cater for groups up to 60 people.

To complement our exceptional food, drink and entertainment programme we have a team that is dedicated to ensuring that you receive professional and genuine hospitality from the moment you make your booking through to your special event.



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Tel: 01303 268263

Email: info@stadecourthotel.co.uk

www.stadecourthotel.co.uk



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[@stadecourthotel](https://twitter.com/stadecourthotel)



Discover the advantages of a local business base on your doorstep

At Basepoint we offer a number of benefits to help you stay local and keep costs down for your business.

For more information on how we can help you benefit from being local, contact your nearest centre and quote 'Think Local'.

Offices | Flexi-Space | Virtual Licences | Meeting Rooms
Unique workspaces for your business



01303 298298

basepoint.co.uk

Contact us today



folkestone@basepoint.co.uk



[@basepoint_folk](https://twitter.com/basepoint_folk)

Don't get in a mess over MOSS – is the advice from DSH

DON'T get in a mess over MOSS. An apparently small but significant change to VAT took place on January 1, 2015, which may prove costly for unprepared businesses.

The change introduces new EU rules on the 'place of supply' of services in relation to business to consumer (B2C) supplies of digital services, such as broadcasting, telecommunications and e-services.

Previously these supplies had been taxable in the location of the supplier, ie you could hold a single VAT registration in the UK (assuming you are established here) and charge UK VAT on all of these supplies.

However, from January 1, 2015, the same supplies are now taxable in the location of the consumer, with tax charged at the VAT rate applicable in the consumer's EU member state.

In order that UK-based suppliers of digital

services do not have to register for VAT in every EU member state where they have customers, HMRC has developed a Mini-One-Stop-Shop (MOSS) service.

This is an electronic system that allows businesses to register in only one EU member state and submit a single VAT return and payment each quarter for all their cross-border supplies of 'digital services'.

Determining which e-services are 'digital services' for the purposes of the new rules can be difficult, and businesses may also find gathering evidence of their customers' locations something of a challenge.

Submitting a late MOSS registration will force businesses to register for VAT in multiple jurisdictions, which can be costly.

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DYNAMIC DUO: The latest Clio supermini (inset) and the Captur crossover powered Renault's 2014 sales success. The newly-arrived Twingo (below) should help Renault pile on yet more sales in 2015

Stream-lined Renault is back on track with style

RENAULT caught a cold in 2012, losing market share and being forced to slash its model line-up.

But the medicine worked: the French brand has since roared back by racking up nearly two years of month-on-month growth that is well ahead of the overall UK market trend.

This meant 2014 sales rose by around 50 per cent, all the more impressive when Renault's budget subsidiary, Romania's Dacia - launched in 2013 - must surely nibble its sister brand's volumes as well as those of rival brands.

Furthermore, the company's hot pace in 2014 was not aided by new models - the all-new Twingo city car, arrived only late on in the year.

The Twingo's cheeky yet compact rear-wheel drive five-door format will certainly help fuel further sales heroics for 2015, and there's an all-new, as yet un-named, sports utility vehicle (SUV) or crossover due this summer, but there's no doubt Renault's rebirth is currently led by two cars that people really want to be seen in - a philosophy that has rescued the company before.

This dynamic duo is the latest and sharpest ever Clio supermini and the Captur - possibly



the market's most stylish crossover.

But Renault has now cast itself as the champion of electric power too, with impressive contenders in both commercial and passenger car markets, in the form of the Kangoo ZE light van and Zoe city car.

The five-door Zoe is proof electric cars don't

need to look like they've been styled by a thwack with a giant frying pan, and Renault has made it as appealing to the pocket as possible too.

The marque has also upped its range-wide appeal with a four-year/100,000 warranty package - still short of Hyundai, Kia and Toyota offer - but better than the market norm.

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The official fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km) for the All-New Renault Twingo Dynamique SCe 70 S&S are: urban 56.5 (5); extra-urban 76.35 (3.7); combined 67.26 (4.2). The official CO₂ emissions are 95g/km. EU Directive and Regulation 692/2008 test environment figures. Fuel consumption and CO₂ may vary with driving styles, road conditions and other factors.

4+ Terms and exclusions apply. 4+ package available to non-business customers on new Renault vehicles. Warranty 4 years/100,000 miles and routine servicing 4 years/48,000 miles (whichever comes first). Servicing package available to Renault Selections customers only; alternatively can be purchased for just £299. Visit renault.co.uk/4plus for full details. *Price shown includes delivery to dealer, number plates, 20% VAT, 12-month government road fund licence and £55 first registration fee. Price shown is valid when ordered and registered by 31 March 2015

GS helps solve the big car eco problem

Eco-friendly petrol-electric hybrid drive is now the only choice for Lexus' middleweight GS model – and quite right too, writes **Steve Loader**...

ASSAILED by the global warming, social responsibility, congestion and parking arguments – to name a few – it's ever harder to justify owning a bigger car even if you can afford it.

But the Lexus GS300h (from £31,495) shows they are not all villains. It's the Toyota luxury brand's new entry-level version of its BMW 5 series basher.

It is 'like driving an armchair' and I make no apology for this cliché, because it really is, to the point where some reviewers say it wallows on corners. So what?

If you choose a big saloon like this, are you really looking to throw it around like a sports coupe? Anyway, there are enough SUV-driving nutters out there fancying they are part of an SAS rapid response team, without others joining in.

What most big car buyers today actually want is all the type's traditional refinement, space and comfort, plus economy to soothe both wallet and eco conscience.

The GS300h delivers all, but the last point is what it is really about: the petrol-electric drivetrain and back-up batteries mean the GS often



runs in electric-only 'EV' mode at lower speeds, making it an economical yet big town car – a rare beast.

Its worst side is motorway cruising, when the 2.5-litre petrol engine shoulders much of the burden, though the Lexus always feels refined and unflustered.

Driven with a light touch, you should average around 50mpg in all situations, while 113g/km of CO2 emissions places it in the 'C' road tax band – free for year one and just £30 in following years – and making it an all-round tax star for company car user choosers.



And the more you drive it, the more you realise how the hybrid set-up works best for bigger cars, despite Toyota's success with its smaller Prius; you have more space in which to lose the battery pack, and the bigger engine means performance is still respectable or

Lexus GS300h Luxury

Price:	from £37,495
Driving appeal:	★★★★
Image:	★★★★
Space:	★★★★
Value:	★★★★
Running costs:	★★★
How green?:	★★★★
Best rival:	BMW 5 Series

even sporty (0-62mph in 9.2 seconds) when petrol and electric power are pressed to work in tandem.

It is also deeply satisfying to see the car's eco gauge showing the batteries being charged when the car is coasting or braking.

The GS comes with a seven-speed auto gearbox, with manual selection available via the stick shift or F1 style paddles on the wheel, meaning the car can be hustled, even if its armchair ride comes at the price of that slightly soft cornering.

Looking beyond technical matters, the cabin quality, clear dashboard and quality sound system, plus competitive specification for the money are all Lexus traits, particularly if you opt for the Luxury version driven here, adding leather seats and sat nav.

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LEGAL AND PUBLIC NOTICES

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Application for Variation of
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We Village Green Restaurants Ltd hereby give notice that we have made an application to the Ashford Borough Council, Licensing Unit, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent TN23 1PL for Variation of the premises licence

1. To alter the ground floor layout and increase the area for provision of licensable activities as per plans deposited with the council

In respect of the premises situated at The Street, Great Chart, Ashford, Kent TN23 3AN and known by the sign of The Swan and Dog. A register of the applications can be viewed at the Licensing Section, Ashford Borough Council, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent TN23 1PL 01233 330721 by appointment (**website:www.ashford.gov.uk**)

Any person wishing to make representation concerning this application should do so in writing to the above local authority giving in detail the grounds of his objection by 23rd January 2015.

The council will not entertain representations where the writer requests that his identity remain anonymous. Copies of all representations will be included in the papers to be presented to the Licensing Panel and will therefore pass into the public domain. Representations must relate to one or more of the four licensing objectives: THE PREVENTION OF CRIME AND DISORDER, PUBLIC SAFETY, THE PREVENTION OF PUBLIC NUISANCE, AND THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM HARM.

It is an offence knowingly or recklessly to make a false statement in connection with an application. Any person who makes a false statement is liable on summary conviction to a maximum fine of £5,000

Stephen Thomas LAW,
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Due to the conditions and complex needs of the pupils at Abbey Court School, continuity and consistency of support is paramount and therefore candidates for all positions will need to commit to the full working hours of the post.

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For further details and a job description, please contact Mrs Linda Taylor, Abbey Court School, Rede Court Road, Strood, Kent, ME2 3SP (01634 338236), stating the position for which you are applying

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Gills' Taylor fired after poor 2014

The club has been left in the hands of Andy Hessenthaler



Football

By Jamie Weir

jamie.weir@archant.co.uk

THE new year will bring a new Gills manager after it was announced by Gillingham FC that manager Peter Taylor had been sacked.

Taylor, 61-years-old, has been in charge of the club for the past 14 months.

He has managed the Gills since being brought on board following the departure of Martin Allen in October 2013.

The team has had a rough season this year, with the Gills currently sitting just two points clear of the relegation zone.

In a statement on the website, Gillingham FC says that Taylor has been relieved of his duties as the club's manager with 'immediate effect'.

PRIESTFIELD: The club have started the hunt for a new manager

The statement says: "The chairman has asked the coaching staff to assist Andy Hessenthaler with this weekend's game against Port Vale."

The side has kicked off the New year with their search for a replacement to Taylor.

Chairman Paul Scally is said to be looking for someone young, with fresh ideas for the team.

One of the names which is currently being touted for the top job at Priestfield is Dennis Wise – a friend of Scally's who recently attended a charity function at the club.

He currently tops the list of bookies favourites for the post, with SkyBet giving odds of 5/6.

The former Swindon Town and Leeds United manager most recently worked as Newcastle United's executive director of football.

And the current caretaker manager,

Hessenthaler, has also been linked to a permanent position in charge of the club.

He has already held the reins at the Gills twice before, guiding the club to thirteenth place in his first season in charge in 2000.

He stayed with the Gills until 2004 when he tendered his resignation after the club narrowly avoided relegation, returning to Priestfield in 2010.

He was in charge of the team for almost two years before his contract was terminated at the end of the 2011/2012 season.

Whoever gets the top job, will be thrown straight into the role.

With the transfer window opening yesterday (January 3) the new manager won't have the luxury of time to decide which new players to bring in, and who to move out.

Dynamos stay at the top after Devils victory

INVICTA Dynamos forward Juraj Huska hit his 100th goal for the team in their 7-2 victory against the Solent Devils.

That gave the Mos their 12th successive victory in the NIHL South Division 1, keeping the team at the top of the league table with two more points.

The 100th goal came for Huska after 26 minutes, as he swept Mos skipper Anthony Leone's pass in after the pair made a clean break through the Devils defence.

The Mos had started the game in sluggish style, with the visitors taking an early lead after drawing first blood just nine minutes in.

But the Gillingham-based team fired into action just six minutes later, when Callum Fowler's drive from the right circle rebounded off of



VICTORY: The Mos celebrate their win Pic: David Trevallion

the arm of netminder Christian Cole to a waiting Michal Oravec with the Slovak turning in the

rebound to tie it up at 1-1.

After the Mos equalised, it kick started their dominance of the match, with the Devils only seeing one more goal, while the Mos found another six on target shots.

Huska even managed to pick up his 101st goal while wearing a Mos shirt, underlining the point for the team.

Despite the team playing a sluggish game at times, and taking time to get started, once they started playing their guests from the Solent had little opportunity for reply.

The win is likely to fill the Dynamos with confidence as they go into today's clash against bottom of the league team, the London Raiders.

With the Mos three points clear at the top, it's been a great start to 2015 for the team.

Sport Shorts » Email sports@kosmedia.co.uk or call Jamie Weir on 01233 653481

Festival invites runners to race at Port of Dover

RUNNERS and keep fit fans are being invited to take part in the Port of Dover Race Festival.

Racers will take to Dover's esplanade and Prince of Wales Pier for the 2015 festival which takes place between March 27 and 29.

The event, which is in aid of The Brathay Trust charity will be the port's second multi-race festival.

Even organiser Karen Webber said: "We'd love to have entries from people at all levels of experience or who are members of their local running club."

"We have fantastic bespoke medals for all participants that were designed by our team to reflect Dover's maritime connection and its link to the Port."

Set against the iconic back-drop of the county's famous White Cliffs and magnificent Dover Castle, the event will comprise multi-looped courses from the eastern end of the seafront along to the west and to the end of the Prince of Wales Pier.



RACE: This is the second race festival to be held at the port



AWARD: Folkestone footballer honoured by the Prime Minister

Walking footballer gets PM's backing

A 54-year-old man from Folkestone who runs the UK's largest Walking Football club has been honoured by the Prime Minister.

Steve Rich, who works as a golf course grounds man and a security guard, has been named the latest winner of the Point of Light – an award which recognises outstanding individual volunteers.

He started organising Walking Football sessions in February last year after seeing a news item which showed how the sport can improve health in the over fifties. He soon

decided to form The Folkestone Wanderers and also organised the first ever national tournament, inviting 18 teams to compete.

Prime Minister David Cameron, said: "Not only is Steve helping people from Folkestone get involved in Walking Football, but his work nationally with the Football Association is supporting this burgeoning sport to grow across the country."

"His love of the beautiful game is clear and is ensuring others can lead fitter and healthier lives."

First 2015 derby ends in 1-1 draw

THE first county derby of the year saw Maidstone clash with the Tonbridge Angels on New Year's Day.

And despite Maidstone sitting second in the Ryman League, the Angels managed to hold them to a 1-1 draw at full time.

The match, which took place in front of a sell-out crowd of 2,226 at

the Stones' Gallagher Stadium, could have easily been a victory for the home side.

The Stones took the lead when Ben Greenhalgh scored in injury-time before the half-time whistle was blown.

And they held it until the 82 minute when former Stones player Sonny Miles scored the equaliser.

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